ETHICS AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH

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.Man's struggle for perfection, spiritual needs, duties, and road to success

Preface

We observe very clearly that everything in this world is in a state of flux and change. The process of renewal in life is a principle underlying the law of creation. In the same way as we believe in the immutable and enduring character of the law of change, we are also forced to believe in certain immutable concepts and to consider them eternal and everlasting. Among these immutable principles are the laws of morality and human excellence which we are forced to observe of the judgements of sound reason .and to lead our lives in accordance with them

One of the most significant factors underlying the success and failure of societies, their triumph and defeat, is the moral factor, whose decisive role in the lives of .nations is so evident and conspicuous that no one can deny it

The real nature of the human being lies in its unlimited capacity for development and perfection. These capacities, faculties, and aspirations are embedded in man's very being and precede his consciousness of his own self. In the opinion of educationists and experts in training, the control of emotions and feelings and their confinement within certain moderate limits is the most fundamental problem of human life. Any kind of development in a person's spiritual faculties must be

regarded as an enduring asset. Their growth and nurturing is far more important than the knowledge and information that persons gather at various levels, because they .use their inner capacities at every moment of their lives

Though the light of reason with its natural radiance illuminates the panorama of life, it is possible that man's innate and deep-rooted instincts, which are the vital sources of every activity in life and which should be obedient tools and means at the disposal of reason, may go out of its control. By getting disoriented from their true axis, they may obstruct reason's vision and restrict its influence in such a manner that the thoughtless person is compelled to follow such inclinations as are opposed to logic and his personal interests. It is here that we realise the important role of morality in life and the great responsibility that lies on the shoulders of experts in matters of .guidance and training

On the other hand, the practice of moral principles involves a certain amount of hardship and privation. Often there is a contradiction between these principles and certain human urges. As a result, the satisfaction of these urges becomes possible only by turning one's back on those principles. Hence a training that does make spirituality its basis cannot resist the shattering blows of instinct. Those who lack the safeguards provided by spirituality are soon carried away by the winds of desires. Because such a training lacks a force that is durable and stable so as to

be able to sustain a person in advancing against the pressure of desires in all .circumstances

Religious faith is the most important guarantee for the practice of human principles and the biggest support for ethical values in man's struggle against passions and instincts. Man can liberate himself from the clutches of harmful urges and motives through faith in a Creator Whose sovereignty extends over all creation and Who knows the secrets that lie hidden in every creature, and through faith in the reward and punishment of the Day of Judgement, as well as through pure and wholesome .ideas

The aim of the prophets, especially the Prophet of Islam, may God bless him and his Household, was to educate and train human beings to attain the higher goals and to .purge their thoughts of pollution and impurities

The ethical campaign of Islam, which was launched by the Noble Prophet, was a unique movement, without a parallel, from the viewpoint of its constructive ethos, depth and originality. It was unique in the sense that it encompassed all the subtleties of the human spirit and paid special attention to every movement of human thought .and consciousness which has its origin in man's inner being

The unprecedented impact that it made on the human psyche and the reality of life was to elevate a degenerate and barbaric people from the depths of abasement to the heights of human dignity and honour. When this degenerate society was given the lamp of faith and guidance, it laid the foundations

of a new order in the world and advanced in such a manner on the road of progress and development that it became a model of morality and human merit, a model .whose like history has not seen

Even today when spiritual hollowness marks the character and spirit of the twentieth-century West, whenever persons grown up in its environment take refuge in the arms of Islam, there occurs a total change in their spirit and ethos. American scholars have admitted that when the Afro-Americans embrace Islam all aspects of their lives undergo a profound change. This is the case despite the fact that in many cases their .knowledge of Islam is not free of certain inadequacies

Professor Eric Lincoln, Chairman of the faculty of sociology of religion in an American university, in a speech delivered on the topic of the impact of Islam in America, :remarked

The impact of Islam on American Blacks has been extraordinary. Until before they embraced Islam, the erstwhile non-Muslim Blacks lived in worst conditions of life, whereas at present they have a much higher level of social and economic life. Among Black Muslim families there is nothing of the kind of deviations and addiction among .youth that hold American society in a state of panic

Even non-Muslim drug addicts who embrace Islam receive a training that enables them to give up addiction and become highly productive members of society. The American Black Muslims are not at all troublesome for others. Only when they are intimidated or attacked

do they defend themselves with all power and force at their command. In this matter they have always been successful. (1)

The present laws and legal systems prevailing in the world can never penetrate to the depths of man's being, which is the source of his actions and efforts, and mobilise his energies for building a wholesome society and shaping human beings who possess sublime qualities and are endowed with a cosmic vision.

In the first place, man is constituted of two different principles, body and spirit. He has, therefore, two dimensions, a celestial as well as terrestrial one, an aspect that is eternal and enduring and another which is ephemeral and transitory. Those who possess a genuine scientific insight and experience know well that these two aspects are so closely linked that any kind of disorientation in one of the two affects the other.

Accordingly, any program that addresses solely one of the dimensions of his being will fail to achieve his all-round felicity and happiness, since it does not correspond to actual reality.

In present-day societies we do not find any balance in their systems of thought, and all of them incline towards one or the other of the extremes. They either incline totally towards the sensible and the material aspect or towards the intellectual and spiritual aspect.

Their attention is centred either on the universe or on man. But the Islamic system of education focuses its attention on man's eternal nature as it really is, and, more than any other

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۱- (Persian daily Ittila'at, no. ۱۴۸۱۲, ۲۶ Shahrivar, ۱۳۵۴ H. Sh. (۱۹۷۵).

school of ethical or educational thought, makes him conscious of his duties. Its comprehensive and original ethical system is a totality of general and specific laws framed for man's individual and social existence. With its material and spiritual dimensions, it ensures the salvation and success of humanity, and by following it .individuals in a society can become worthy and happy human beings

The improvement of one's environment must begin from oneself. Without doubt anyone who attempts to reform his own person as one of the cells of the social organism and endeavours to develop his higher qualities and spiritual faculties with courage and patience, will be one of those who strive for the betterment of humanity, .because a reformed human society is the result of reformed and mature individuals

It is hoped that the contents of this book, which draws its material from the rich Islamic sources and represents the ethos of religious teachings and, in addition, presents the views and opinions of Western scholars concerning the problems relating to education and psychology, will serve as a beneficial moral and social guide. It is hoped that it will make a contribution however humble, to highlighting the true goals of education. It will be a matter of great satisfaction for me if I succeed in elucidating in this book a part of the great truths communicated by the guides of .humanity and teachers of morality

It should be mentioned that a summary of this book (perhaps less than a third of its (length

was published in the valuable religious and scholarly journal Maktab-e Islam, and now it is offered to the honoured reader in a more complete and comprehensive form. I beseech God Almighty, Who is the source of all being and before Whose glory and splendour we are no more faded murals, to grant us success and welfare in the .shelter of the blessed teaching of Islam

(Tir, ۱۳۵۳ (June-July, ۱۹۷۴

Sayyid Mujtaba Musawi Lari

Chapter ۱: Man Moves Towards Perfection

point

Every human being that is born in this world, regardless of its individual or social circumstances, aspires to its own perfection in accordance with its innate nature and its inborn intellect. It puts up with all kinds of sufferings and hardships for its hope of a brighter future. Its starting point is deficiency and its movement is directed towards perfection. It grows and develops with every step forward on the path of perfection. Man's intellect and spirit give such a profundity, power and speed to his movement .towards perfection that there is no time limit to it except eternity itself

This innate love for perfection is strong in the human being, but it is also present in the animals. They overcome every hindrance that they encounter in its way, avoid everything that they consider as harmful, and advance towards their instinctive goals. It may be said that all the phenomena that exist in nature, from infinitesimal atomic .particles to the magnificent world of the galaxies, all are part of this caravan

:A scholar writes

The wheat plant has been

given a movement that enables it to give a greater yield, and the red rose a motion that gives it beauty and aroma. Man, too, has a motion by mean of which he advances on the path of wisdom and love. So if we observe certain ills that affect the growth of the wheat or the beauty or aroma of the rose or the purity of the human soul, we must not ascribe them to the motion itself but rather to a contrary cause that emerged in the course of motion.

Now we can understand to what extent the word 'purpose' assists us in thinking properly. It makes us understand that the universe, of which we find ourselves to be a small member, is moral and conscious, that we do not live in a dark and disorderly cosmos, that there is certainly a mover behind all this motion and that there exists a great consciousness and intellect behind all things. That is sufficient to convince us that life is something great and glorious, and it is here that we can at least prepare ourselves to co-operate and go along with the world's conscious spirit, knowing that opposing it is harmful for our life.(١)

Man's physical development lies beyond his will, whereas his spiritual development is voluntary. Hence it is not worthy of him that man should deviate from the general evolutionary trend of the universe and remain deficient in the cosmic system of progression. It is evident that inner development and

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١- Encyclopaedia Britannica.

perfection is something immaterial. Physical experiment and study lead him to make discoveries of a material nature, but he can never place himself on the highway of perfection and attain to the peaks of spiritual ascension with the means of physical .methods

In order that a tree may realize the full potential of its growth it must be freed of such hindrances to its growth as weeds and rocks and be provided the benefit of such agents as water, sun and air, which are essential for its growth. Man, too, in the process of developing the different dimensions of his being (body, spirit, and mind) must equip himself with the potent factors that contribute to his ascent towards eternity and infinitude. That is, he must employ them as the means that help him to achieve his ends and combat such factors that hinder his movement towards that .goal

Man must regulate the dimensions of his being in different directions in such a manner that would enable him to meet all his material and spiritual demands and needs and live worthily by basing his life on a precise and accurately worked-out plan. He must build an orderly society free from conflict, injustice, aggression, ignorance and sin, in which human beings can attain purity, light and intellectual sublimity and .reach the high peaks of humanity

Man's being is a turbulent aggregate of various urges. These urges in their natural and balanced state are not only not useless or harmful, rather each of them plays a

vital role in man's spiritual makeup. However, an uncontrolled and unrestrained satisfaction of these urges is contrary to development. Should these urges be left free and uncontrolled in a person, he will become a slave of his savage and primordial urges and desires. Falling down from the high peaks of humanity, excellence and freedom he will sink into the mire of decadence and destruction. An animal is compliant and submissive to its urges, but a human being is loyal to his interests and obedient to his reason. He has the power to oppose his injurious tendencies and to affirm his beneficial and advantageous inclinations. For in the same way as physical instincts spring from man's nature, so do his positive, benign and truth-seeking impulses originate in his being, giving rise to his titanic, effulgent spiritual powers that .can give birth to purity, dignity, power and righteousness

Self–Purification as Agent of Development

There is no doubt that if one wants to follow definite principles in life-whether of a religious or a non-religious character-one must adopt a well-defined approach. In order to adopt a well-defined approach it is essential to select a single goal and move in a single direction. Hence one must avoid desultory involvements that may suit one's passing desires but are contrary to one's principles and goals in life. Hence self-control and self-discipline is essential in life for every man who wants to lead a human and rational existence. Man is a being equipped with the power of intellect and possessing unlimited desires. Should he

recognize no restraint in life, he can become a bloodthirsty beast that can cause great .destruction

Man's perfection and greatness does not depend on physical matters, which can affect his experience only on a sensible plane. Scientific advancements do not bring about an improvement in all the aspects of man. Man's real perfection lies in his liberating himself from the straits of illusory lusts and physical pleasures and in advancing on the path of humanity by edifying his sensibilities, disciplining himself and .becoming acquainted with higher ideas and a wider horizon

The idea of a sumum bonum (Highest Good) is deeply rooted in the human spirit, otherwise man would not have been its seeker during his childhood days nor would he have been able to take flights on its vast horizons. The radiance of sublime values is so much attractive that men fall in love with them willingly and voluntarily pursue them. There is an upsurge of passion for strength from one's inner depths which is followed by the endeavour to acquire it. All of these are indications of the fact that love for perfection has deep roots in the human spirit and it begins to reveal itself .once there arises a suitable opportunity

The muscles become strong and powerful as a result of exercise. This is also true of the spiritual faculties, which become strong as a result of exercise and persisting effort, with the difference that the physical energies of the human body are limited and its powers are limited

by the capacities of the body's sinews and cells. However, the wonders revealed by man's history are all manifestations of the power of the developed soul, whose growth is the result of a gradual emancipation from the limits and obstacles of material things. The horizons of self-knowledge and self-consciousness expand only when it is realized that the human spirit is a great and wonderful masterpiece of creation. It reveals itself in its show of strength, in its dynamism, its domination over material things, and especially in its capacity to lift man from the depths of .decadence, weakness and inadequacy to the heights of communion with the Divine

Of course, in the same way as the body is forced to endure a certain amount of hardship in order to fulfil its vital functions, so also the spirit must put up with pain and toil in the course of moral development. All the various concepts and principles in the field of character building revolve around the axis of the soul or the spirit. It is spirit which is capable of reform and discipline. It is spirit which is capable of attaining sublimity and acquiring higher human qualities and excellences, loving as it does spiritual perfection. And finally, it is spirit which generates a series of ethical laws for .the human being that the animal neither possesses nor requires

:Dr. Alexis Carrel, a French scholar, says

We must habituate ourselves to distinguish between good and evil with the same perspicacity that we distinguish between light and

darkness and between noise and silence, and then commit ourselves to avoid vice and embrace virtue. However, abstinence from vice requires a healthy physical and psychological makeup. The purposive growth of the body and the soul is not possible .except with the help of self-purification

For those seeking spiritual edification, no kind of extravagance is permissible. The inner order always takes its own requital. The physiological and psychological state makes up the essential basis of personality and is like a spring-board from which the .soul can take its flight

The path of edification is directed upwards in time and the travellers mostly slide into swamps or fall into ravines in the course of the journey, or stay behind by the side of riverside gardens and go into an endless sleep, whether in happiness or suffering, in affluence or poverty, health or sickness. Nevertheless, one must carry on his endeavour and rise to his feet after every fall and, little by little, acquire the zeal, faith and the will to aspire and the spirit of mutual help, the capacity to love and, ultimately, salvation.(۱)

There is an absence of a precise equilibrium, order and balance in the world today between individual and society and between the body and the spirit. When man allows his human specialties to remain idle and suppresses the subtle, critical and vital aspects of his own being, which are a necessary part of his unique vicegerency of God on the world stage, when he repudiates his human dignity although created

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۱ - Carrel, Alexis, Reflections sur la conduite de la vie, Persian translation. Rah wa .rasm-e zindagi, pp. ۹۹-۱۰۰

as a human being, flouts his God-given nature and, ultimately, programs his life on the basis of hedonism and pursuit of desires, that amounts to a negation of his own being and his raison d'être. When that happens, it is inevitable that the God-given nature should exact severe damages for his unprincipled thinking and foolish conduct and .wreck its revenge upon him

Right now humanity is paying a heavy compensation for its conduct in terms of peace, happiness and its essential human characteristics. The effect of this disorder and misconduct emerges in the shape of various kinds of crimes and perversions. In the societies of today perhaps no minute passes without there occurring a heinous crime and such crimes as adultery, rape, theft and so on. This is one of the biggest problems of the world's nations today and it must be considered a great human crisis of world-wide dimensions. The yearly expenditure incurred for the purpose of preventing crime or on the search, prosecution, trial and punishment of criminals makes up a .stupendous sum

One of the factors responsible for the prevalence of callousness in human relations, widespread cruelty, and the daily increasing moral insensitivity in Western society lies in the way of thinking of some of its teachers and philosophers. Nietzsche, the well-known German philosopher, based his philosophy on pitilessness and racial superiority, which became a motive that lay behind the savage bloodshed and :destructive wars of the last century. Such is the logic of this Western philosopher

Pity stands opposed

to the tonic emotions which heighten our vitality; it has a depressing effect. We are deprived of strength when we feel pity...

Quite in general, pity crosses the law of development, which is the law of selection. It preserves what is ripe for destruction, it defends those who have been disinherited and condemned by life, and by the abundance of the failures of all kinds which it keeps alive, it gives life itself a gloomy and questionable aspect....

Pity is the practice of nihilism. To repeat: this depressive and contagious instinct arouses those instincts which aim at the preservation of life and at the enhancement of its value. It multiplies misery and conserves all that is miserable, and thus is a prime instrument of the advancement of decadence....(۱) An "altruistic" morality-a morality in which self-interest wilts away-remains a bad sign under all circumstances. This is true of individuals; it is particularly true of nations. The best is lacking when self-interest begins to be lacking. Instinctively to choose what is harmful for oneself, to feel attracted by "disinterested" motives, that is virtually the formula of decadence... Strong ages, noble cultures, consider pity, "neighbour-love" and the lack of self and self-assurance something contemptible...(۲)

Sensual pleasure, lust for power, selfishness: these three have hitherto been cursed the most and held in the worst and most unjust repute-these three will I weigh well and humanly.(۳)

The Causes of Crime

The causes behind the commission of crimes as well as the character of criminals must be studied to see whether they are such

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۱- Nietzsche, The Antichrist, in Walter Kaufmann, The Portable Neitzsche (New York: The Viking Press, ۱۹۷۰) pp. ۵۷۲-۵۷۳.

۲- Idem. Twilight of the Idols, in Kaufmann, op. cit., pp. ۵۳۵-۵۳۶.

۳- Idem. Thus Spoke Zarathustra (Penguin Books, ۱۹۷۵), trans. by R. Hollingdale J., p.

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by nature and birth. Those who are polluted by various moral vices and commit crime, are they born with such tendencies or does their criminality originate in some spiritual ?disease? If it does, then how can they be treated

Some experts in the field believe that a group of criminals are basically born such; criminality is inherent in their nature. This kind of individuals have even certain apparent abnormal characteristics which differentiate them from other people. They are, so to say, criminals by nature. Lombroso, the well-known Italian criminologist, was a strong defender of this theory of his own. His theory found many followers and .was received with great interest by his contemporary writers

Without doubt man is a being susceptible to moral instruction. He performs a part of his actions out of his own free will, and voluntarily refrains from certain acts. Such a being is necessarily endowed with free will, otherwise it would be futile to admonish and instruct a creature whose actions are completely determined and which has no will of its own and no control over its own destiny. Competent thinkers consider man .to be free in his actions and responsible for them

Teachers of morality and ethics base their moral teachings and educative efforts meant to bring welfare to man on the same approach that is on a prescription consisting of certain do and don'ts and bidding one to learn certain points and to .abstain from certain actions in order to achieve his personal welfare

If one were to

study the plight of juvenile delinquents in reformatories, prisons and mental hospitals, it would be found that they are those who have grown up in morally polluted or .negligent families and had no personal experience of moral rectitude and purity

As to the group of criminals who feel no restraint against committing any kind of crime or offence, most of them are those who opened their eyes in families devoid of emotional warmth and moral virtues and polluted with various sorts of vices and indecencies, or they are those who have lived in a decadent social environment. It was family and social factors that caused them to choose crime and vice rather than .rectitude and purity

The Worthiest Duty of Man

The most important, as well as the worthiest, of man's duties is education. Man discovered the value of education at the very dawn of his existence. For the same reason, he laid down certain principles and objectives commensurate with the development of his human environment and in proportion to his perception of his real duties and mission in life, though these objectives were sometimes correct and at .times misconceived

We clearly witness the amazing changes brought about in the course of human history by the various schools of thought that totally altered the features of life. Our study of the world's realities makes us arrive at the conclusion that man has not been created evil and satanic by nature. Were we to accept that man is inherently evil, all the efforts to educate him would be fruitless

and futile and the endeavours and efforts of all the divine prophets and world's educators would be an exercise in futility. Had crime, murder and destructiveness been inherent in the nature of the people of the Arabian peninsula, would it have been possible for the Prophet of Islam, may God bless him and his Household, to bring about such a comprehensive revolution in the spirit of individual Arabs and transform ?their essential nature

It is true that man is confronted with physical forces and urges at the first stages of his life. From the moment that he opens his eyes on this world, his faculties are realized gradually one after another and thus he begins his activities. However, at the same time, by the side of physical faculties he possesses an immense capacity and potentiality for spiritual development and growth. There are capacities and aspirations more sublime than needs that are latent in his being, and his energies, while they are being utilized, may take various forms and flow in different channels, although the phase of spiritual development generally commences later than the .phases of physical growth

But in any case it is a natural process and man's higher aspirations are capable of taking over and employing his other energies for their own purposes. However, for this objective he stands in need of effective external assistance, care and guidance. Because in the absence of such assistance these aspirations may suffer deviation or .misguide

Of course, such external assistance is not something unnatural or

imposed but a part of the human nature. It is similar to helping a child to learn speech although it possesses the natural capacity for speech since the day of its birth. The principle of human development and man's destiny as the noblest of creatures is :described in the Holy Qur'an in these words

O man! Thou art labouring unto thy Lord laboriously, and thou shalt encounter Him. ((۸۴:۶) And that the final end is unto thy Lord. (۵۳:۴۲

Man, in the course of his flight on the horizons of being and towards the infinite, must draw inspiration from the teachings of divine prophets, which constitute a genuine and comprehensive program of education. This is necessary in order to release the divine energies latent, in his being and which he needs in order to be able to attain to .the ultimate end of his development, success and deliverance

:Gustave Lebon writes

It was after relentless endeavours that philosophy realised that it cannot make a way to the supernatural. Hence we are forced to follow the prescriptions of the physicians of the spirit who have insight into the peculiarities of the human soul and can be entrusted to take care of his spiritual development. These spiritual physicians are God-sent prophets and seers who propose prescriptions for man's welfare received from the source of revelation and inspiration and aimed to achieve an inner discipline, .by means of which they can assist him to attain the perfection of which he is worthy

The Holy Qur'an refers to both

the aspects of man's nature while describing human nature.(1) It points out that should man fail to acquire the basic training, the tempestuous urges within him will begin to advance, weakening the forces of reason and conscience and subjugating other impulses within the soul, employing them for their own purposes and ends. The greatest marvel of man's creation is that he possesses a two-sided nature. Therefore, one must not ignore his capacity for taking on different colours and the need to guide him in a definite direction.

'Ali, may peace be upon him, said:

Beings endowed with the faculty of reason require education in the same way as farms need rain.(2)

If the principles of education are not based on the regulating factors and the human energies be left untended and un-channelled in a state of wild freedom, they will always remain subject to the primary human needs. That is why human character and conduct always stand in need of a formative training through praise and reward and blame and punishment.

The Qur'an declares:

Prosperous is he who purifies the soul and failed has he who soils it with sin and impurity. (91:9-10)

The very concept of punishment is based on man's innate power of discrimination between good and evil, and exoneration from responsibility requires the presence of some physical or mental deficiency in a person. The viewpoint maintained by some modern trends of thought that exonerate the criminal as a victim of social evils or decadent and deviant training and consider the individual,

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1- The Qur'an, 17:69, 95:4, 14:33, 43:14.

2- Al-Amidi, Ghurar al-hikam, p. 224.

despite his possession of an innate power of discrimination, as a powerless and .negative being, cannot be considered as a scientific truth

Of course, no one can deny the great role of upbringing and training or ignore the momentous responsibility borne by society and environment; for the various factors related to commission of crime share the responsibility for it. But nevertheless it does .not mean that the culprit is devoid of responsibility for his act

There is no doubt that a group of offenders consists of those who can be reformed through a little guidance and direction. They are victims of spiritual illnesses and their crime is a product of certain psychic disorders and afflictions which are not deeply rooted. Or it is a result of company and association with wayward and immoral persons. This kind of sick persons should be identified and treated at the earliest opportunity. On the whole, severity of reaction and intensity of campaign against .crime cannot by itself root out criminal conduct

The punishment meted out to the criminal for the sake of safeguarding social and individual welfare is necessary, because the sanctions against him are a natural result and product of his own conduct and essential for the maintenance of justice and equilibrium in society and security of social life. However, punishment alone is not sufficient and that which is more significant is the re-education of criminals, so that their unhealthy approach to life can be altered through fruitful instruction and so that their unlawful

.and aggressive spirit does not infect other individuals in society

?Are There Any Born Criminals

Today the theory of Lombroso and his followers who believed in the existence of born criminals has been rejected by experts in the field. While serving as a doctor in the Italian army, Lombroso had noticed that tattooing was very common among criminals. This led him to conclude that criminals had a lower level of physical sensitivity than normal people and that their lack of moral sensitivity was also a .product of the lack of physical sensitivity

Later on, while dissecting the brain of a robber he noted that it resembled in certain features the brains of lower vertebrae. Those observations formed a prelude to the theory of the appearance of hidden hereditary traits. Lombroso considered certain characteristics as being indicative of a criminal temperament, some of them being: curly hair, slanting eyes, a protruding chin, arching eyebrows, and abnormally big or small head, protruding cheekbones, big ears, a disproportionate relationship between .the size of the skull and the face, and a long-drawn forehead

When several of these characteristics are present in a person, one could ascertain with certainty his criminal nature, he believed. He named these characteristics, 'the :marks of decadence.' Dr. Alexis Carrel, a French scholar, says

The born criminal, invented by Lombroso, does not exist. But there are born defectives who become criminals. In reality, many criminals are normal. They are often more clever than policemen and judges. Sociologists and social workers do not meet them during their survey of

prisons. The gangsters and crooks, heroes of the cinema and the daily papers, sometimes display normal and even high mental, affective, and aesthetic activities. But their moral sense has not developed. This disharmony in the world of consciousness is a phenomenon characteristic of our time.

We have succeeded in giving organic health to the inhabitants of the modern city. But, despite the immense sums spent on education, we have failed to develop completely their intellectual and moral activities. Even in the elite of the population, consciousness often lacks harmony and strength. The elementary functions are dispersed, of poor quality, and of low intensity. Some of them may be quite deficient.

The happiest and most useful men consist of a well-integrated whole of intellectual, moral, and organic activities. The quality of these activities, and their equilibrium, gives to such a type its superiority over the others. Their intensity determines the social level of a given individual. It makes of him a tradesman or a bank president, a little physician or a celebrated professor, a village mayor or a president of the United States. The development of complete human beings must be the aim of our efforts. It is only with such thoroughly developed individuals that a real civilization can be constructed.(١)

A contemporary psychologist writes:

Today it has been conclusively established, scientifically as well as philosophically and beyond any doubt, that there does not exist an 'evil' human being; there exist only sick human beings. The realisation of this matter is so significant

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١- Carrel, Alexis, Man, the Unknown (Bombay: Wilco Publishing House), p. ١٣٧.

that it may be said without any exaggeration that no discovery or invention in the world since the emergence of man until the present has had, not will ever have, an equal impact on human welfare. That is, the day that people truly realise this fact and the organisation of society and its regulating institutions is based on this established truth the major part of human suffering, wretchedness, enmities, conflicts and ?punishments will undergo a moderation. Why

Because when everybody comes to know, for instance, that stinginess, envy, fear, cunning, prejudice, capriciousness, injustice and hundreds of other vices of this kind are logical outcomes of spiritual illnesses that are susceptible to treatment exactly like the common cold, sore throat, indigestion and so on, that will yield two definite .important and useful results

Firstly, the sick persons themselves, who are today regarded as 'evil'* will turn to treatment with a full hope and become healthy and good human beings. Secondly, the people will not view them with hostility and resentment as 'evil' persons, but will look upon them as sick human beings deserving sympathy. And it goes without saying that .there is a great difference between these two outlooks and their results

Right now this is the principle that is implemented in most schools in civilised countries, and even in prisons, and this approach is gradually coming to be used with very beneficial results. It is the duty of humanist writers to make all efforts to propagate these extremely beneficial truths, so

(that all societies throughout the world are benefited by them.(١

This scientific and philosophical theory, whose discovery has been ascribed here to the world of modern science, is one which has a history of fourteen centuries in the religious texts of Islam. The Holy Qur'an refers to the hypocrites as sick persons :suffering from two-facedness and malice

(There is a sickness in their hearts. (٢:١٠

Some moralists and adherents of certain faiths consider man's inner nature as evil :and sinful. John Dewey writes

Give a dog a bad name and hang him." Human nature has been the dog of" professional moralists, and consequences accord with the proverb. Man's nature has been regarded with suspicion, with fear, with sour looks, sometimes with enthusiasm for its possibilities but only when these were placed in contrast with its actualities. It has appeared to be so evilly disposed that the business of morality was to prune and .curb it; it would be thought better of if it could be replaced by something else

It has been supposed that morality would be quite superfluous were it not for the inherent weakness, bordering on depravity, of human nature. Some writers with a more genial conception have attributed the current blackening to theologians who have thought to honour the divine by disparaging the human. Theologians have doubtless taken a gloomier view of man than have pagans and secularists. But this explanation doesn't take us far. For after all these theologians are themselves human, and they would have been without influence if

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.Ravankawi (Psychoanalysis), p. ٧ -١

(the human audience had not somehow responded to them.(1

Man's Pure and Immaculate Nature

:The Holy Prophet of Islam, may God bless him and his Household, said

It means that every child is born with a pure and sinless nature. It is its parents that bring him up as a Christian or Jew. The religious creed of the parents and their mode (of thinking affects its impressionable mind.(2

:Imam 'Ali, may peace be upon him, is reported to have said to his son

A young heart is like virgin soil which accepts whatever kind of seed is sown in it. My son, I took the opportunity offered by your childhood years for training you, before that your impressionable heart should become hardened and before that different (things occupy your mind.(3

A part from the fact that man is definitely not born with a criminal disposition, there is a force latent in the primordial structure of every human man that draws him towards goodness. This force makes him return to his original state whenever he departs from his true orientation. In the idiom of the philosophers, whenever a certain nature is subject to and extraneous force, there comes into being an inclination to revert it to .its original natural state

Since very ancient times, a group of philosophers has felt that theoretical reason represents the highest faculty of the human soul, although its capacity for comprehension is limited and the surety of its practical effectiveness is not very considerable. Theoretical reason is inadequate in some matters, such as in delivering ,just judgements

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John Dewey, Human Nature and Conduct (New York: Henry Holt and Company, -۱ .۱۹۲۸), p. ۱

.Al-Majlisi, Bihar al-anwar, vol. ۲, p. ۸۷ -۲

.Nahj al-balaghah, trans. by Fayd al-Islam, p. ۹۳ -۳

the reproof of the criminal and the sinner, and prescription of a program that may guarantee human happiness. Hence there should exist an independent force in man's being that guides him to most of the virtues and assists him to sacrifice and seek .perfection and which explains his moral behaviour

The Holy Qur'an asserts that inclination towards faith and repulsion from sin and disobedience exists in man's nature. God has not only placed faith in the Source of Creation in man's nature and bestowed upon him the capacity to know God, but has also created therein a natural attraction towards virtue and a repulsion from vice, sin .and indecency, so that the soul is unconsciously attracted towards human merits

But God has endeared to you faith, decking it fair in your hearts, and He has made (detestable to you unbelief and ungodliness and disobedience. (۴۹:۷

:According to Khwajah Hafiz of Shiraz

This love and loyalty between me and thee, I have brought from there, not developed .them here

:Bertrand Russell writes

The old idea was that virtue depends essentially upon will: we were supposed to be full of bad desires, which we controlled by an abstract faculty of volition. It was apparently regarded as impossible to root out bad desires: all we could do was to control them. The situation was exactly analogous to that of the criminal and the police. No one supposed that a society without would-be criminals was possible; the most that could be done was to have such an efficient police force

that most people would be afraid to commit crimes, and the few exceptions would be caught and punished. The modern psychological criminologist is not content with this view; he believes that the impulses to crime could, in most cases, be prevented from developing by suitable education. And what applies to society applies to the (individual.(١

;Ralph Waldo Emerson writes

The simple rise as by specific levity not into a particular virtue, but into the region of all the virtues. They are in the spirit which contains them all. The soul requires purity, but purity is not it; requires justice, but justice is not that; requires beneficence, but is somewhat better; so that there is a kind of descent and accommodation felt when we leave speaking of moral nature to urge a virtue which it enjoins. To the well-born child all the virtues are natural, and not painfully acquired. Speak to his heart, and the man (becomes suddenly virtuous.(٢

Therefore, according to Islam as well as realistic thinkers of the present-day world man comes into the world with a pure and wholesome spiritual nature in accordance with the laws of heredity. The presence of sin and corruption in him is accidental and extraneous to his original nature. It is the violation of original nature or the misguide and retrogression of instincts that leads not only to the emergence of spiritual sickness but blocks the natural flow of the spirit by means of certain complexes Otherwise he has the capacity to advance towards perfection with

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.Russell, Bertrand, On Education (London: Unwin Books, ١٩۶۶), pp. ٢۵-٢۶ -١

Emerson, Ralph Waldo, "The Over-Soul," in Man and Man: The Social Philosophers -٢ (New York: Modern Pocket Library, ١٩۵۴), ed. by Commins, Saxe, Linscott, Robert N., p. .۴٢٣

.rapid and sure steps in accordance with his genuine impulses

Of course, the influence of environment is not the same on different brains with their different neurological makeup, in the same way as environment does not have a similar effect on the growth of different plants and herbs. Every individual lives with his own neurological makeup which he has inherited in accordance with the law of heredity. No two individuals in the world have an identical neurological structure and makeup and they tangibly exhibit a difference from the viewpoint of individual .physiology and bodily hormones

Hence, in the same way as a particular environment affects every seed and plant in a specific manner, so also its effect on everybody's brain's neurones is also specific, in the sense that life in a particular environment has a specific effect on every individual and produces a particular personality which is not comparable with that of another .individual

Even two children of the same parents, who should apparently possess certain common characteristics due to a common heredity and environment, exhibit an amazing difference from the viewpoint of personal qualities. The call of the prophets is based on man's inherent disposition towards monotheism and his innate moral nature. These natural principles, together with reason, constitute the fundamental .basis of education

The great role of the divine prophets, which they seek to fulfil through their mission and teachings, is to awaken the inherent capacities of man latent in his nature. It is possible that the inner light

of nature may become dimmed due to certain conditions, circumstance and various factors relating to man's being, but the real nature is never obliterated. The foundations of this nature have remained secure and stable despite all the difficulties and impediments that rose in its way throughout the course of history. Ultimately, .deviation from the course of nature is not related to man's innate makeup and reality

That we can engage in training and self-discipline through reliance on human nature is an extremely significant principle. But we must also not forget that violent passions with their destructive power can weaken our nature, and should we fail to channel them properly and to use them in a balanced manner and prove to be incapable of checking their excesses, our natural powers will be enfeebled and we will fail to utilise fruitfully the potential offered by nature. The creation of balance in passion and behaviour depends on recognition of the point of moderation, on exercise, and on :constancy of effort and sacrifice. Aristotle says in this regard

That moral virtue is a mean, then, and in what sense it is so, and that it is a mean between two vices, the one involving excess, the other deficiency, and that it is such because its character is to aim at what is intermediate in passions and in actions, has been sufficiently stated. Hence also it is no easy task to be good. For in everything it is no easy task to find the middle, e.g. to

find the middle of a circle is not for everyone but for him who knows; so, too, anyone can get angry-that is easy-or give or spend money; but to do this to the right person, to the right extent, at the right time, with the right motive, and in the right way, that is not for everyone, nor is it easy; wherefore goodness is both rare and laudable and .noble

Hence he who aims at the intermediate must first depart from what is the more .contrary to it, as Calypso advises:Hold the ship out beyond that surf and spray

For of the extremes one is more erroneous, one less so; therefore, since to hit the mean is hard in the extreme, we must as a second best, as people say, take the least .of the evils, and this will be done best in the way we describe

But we must consider the things towards which we ourselves also are easily carried away, for some of us tend to one thing, some to another; and this will be recognisable from the pleasure and the pain we feel. We must drag ourselves away to the contrary extreme; for we shall get into the intermediate state by drawing well away from .error, as people do in straightening sticks that are bent

Now if everything the pressure or pleasure is that to be guarded against for we do not judge it impartially. We ought, then, to feel towards pressure as the elders of the ,people felt towards Helen

and in all circumstances repeat their sayings for if we dismiss pleasure thus we are less likely to go astray. It is by doing this, then (to sum the matter up) that we shall best be able to hit the mean.(1)

Spiritual training and growth should be our highest goal in life. It is our duty to open the windows of our heart and mind to let in virtue, righteousness, love and mercy. These are the things that enlighten and burnish our hearts and make our Creator, unique in His essence, to be pleased with us.

Most people engage in all kinds of labour and practise self-denial in order to acquire the material means of life and comfort and go on toiling until death. For this purpose they even deny themselves the comforts that they are after and which they imagine to be the means of happiness. That kind of thinking is erroneous and that is the cause of the failure and wretchedness of most people.

They ought to know that they have lost the way and left the true path of happiness and success. One cannot attain a life of peace, free of anxiety, through the pursuit of passing pleasures and delights or through gathering an immense amount of wealth. Such a program does not sustain life or make it flourish. On the contrary, it quickly dries up the vital resources of life and destroys them.

One who seeks happiness through the pursuit of pleasures will find nothing except anxiety and bafflement.

۱- Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, in Commins Linscott, o p. cit., pp. ۳۸-۳۹.

If we fail to keep in check the rebellious passions and infantile inclinations within us, which constantly keep on raising their heads, with the means of reason and sagacity, they will overpower our conscience and make us their own slave. The more that we succeed in subduing our lusts and desires, the closer shall we move to happiness. To sum up, all our misfortunes, afflictions and helplessness, and, in a word, everything that clouds the horizons of our life, is a product of the domination of lusts over our .being

Freedom and Restraint

In all such cases the question is not one of having to make a choice between freedom and bondage, but one between two kinds of bondage. In other words, it is not one of having to weigh freedom against bondage, but of choosing between two kinds of freedom. Man is free to choose between a freedom that is human and another that is bestial. The bondages or restraints applicable to man are those of conviction, morality and human merit. The bondages peculiar to animals are instinct and unrestrained .impulse

One who yields to the call of his carnal desires and follows them obediently without paying heed to the outcome is one who has broken all human restraints and freed himself from the bondage of religion, morality and humanity. He is the one who has failed to resist the temptations of the carnal self and to stand up against the pressure of instincts. Liberation from all restraint for the sake of fulfilment

of instinctive urges is not real freedom, for in such a state man unconsciously negates his own being and deviates from his raison d'être. Then his ultimate destiny and end is .decadence and inevitable destruction

However, a human being that has made a firm covenant with God and does not seek to violate it in his life is one who resolutely employs his energies and powers in the course that he has decided upon. The greater the power of his conviction, the firmer is he in holding on to that covenant. He has a sense of real emancipation in his encounter with the tyranny of passions. That is, he is free from the oppression of desires and resistant to their compulsion. When man undertakes to make a dignified effort to obtain freedom and to become an active force in the world of being and to make the ascent towards the sublime station of which he is worthy, he will not accept .any logic that violates his genuine humanity

The major part of the precepts of religion relates to the control and moderation of passions and the development of the higher impulses; for what force other than faith in the heart of the religious person can moderate vital instincts and keep man from ?deviation by the means of its spiritual power

An inner sense of responsibility is essential to avert the disruption of social order and the spread of crime and to preserve society from the harms of aggression and violation of law. It

is faith which is the source of such an inner sense of responsibility and which has the power to control man's behaviour, character and thought. It is the creation of faith in God amongst people that Islam proposes as the foundation of education as well as the basis of social and economic reform and as the means of preventing crime and .offence

For this purpose it has also adopted the best possible method. On the one hand it holds out a promise of highest reward for the virtuous and, on the other, threatens with severest punishment those who surrender to immoral and indecent conduct under the influence of rebellious passions. This approach has the result that man advances with great eagerness towards moral virtues and the fear of punishment .makes him avoid vices resolutely

Habit and Its Constructive and Destructive Role

The positive and negative aspects of habit play a fundamental role in man's growth and development as well as his corruption and decadence. A study of history can reveal to one that heritage (which in essence consists of collective habits) has been an effective and important factor in determining the destinies of human societies. The spiritual power of steadfastness vis-à-vis adversities, hardships and calamities, a natural resistance to the negative aspects of events, and the capacity to overcome .their effects, are results of the positive aspects of social heritage

However, the harms ensuing from the negative aspects of heritage and habit are very extensive and their damage is irremediable. Thus in the same way as heritage plays an

important role in making calamities and their negative aspects bearable, it is also a powerful factor from the viewpoint of destroying the positive and beneficial impact of .indubitable truths on the human spirit

A negative heritage and custom becomes an impediment in the way of perception of the real value of things and many principles and laws pertaining to the world of matter and spirit, as well as to the understanding of many beneficial and illuminating ideas. It does not allow man to perceive facts with a clear vision and to know their significance. In order to understand this matter, it is not necessary to cite the history of some of .the subtle and profound problems of science

The majority of nature's most significant and wonderful phenomena have remained unknown for centuries on account of the habitual familiarity with the apparent character of the laws of nature. It has happened very often that a moment of reflection and attention opposed to the course of habit has been immensely .rewarding in opening the path of progress and advancement for man

It is possible that even knowledge may encounter a spiritual impediment and barrier and lose its value, becoming thereby equal to ignorance form the viewpoint of effectiveness. That is because negative habit causes a distortion in character and becomes an impediment in the way of the fruitfulness of knowledge on the level of .action

There are many learned persons who are so thoroughly entangled in the mysterious tentacles of habit that are rendered

incapable in life of implementing their knowledge and understanding either in their character and conduct or for the betterment of others. They somehow lack sufficient power to stop a chain of events which they know for certain to be harmful and detrimental. This blindness and neglect is a result of intellectual habit which results in .a resistance to reason and knowledge and stunts man's spiritual growth

Many are specialists among physicians who possess a remarkable degree of specialised knowledge but whose accumulated knowledge fails to make any spiritual contribution and, on the level of action, is ineffective in improving their conduct. In the view of Islam, merit is not confined to knowledge. Rather knowledge is a means to understanding and one of the essential means of spiritual growth, for this passive virtue, except for introducing difference in the levels of understanding, is by itself .incapable of performing an active and effective spiritual function

:The Qur'an criticises the learned, who are devoid of character in these words

O you who believe, wherefore do you say what you do not? Very hateful is it to God, (that you say what you do not (۶۱:۲-۳

The emphasis of Islam on thought, intellection and contemplation in all situations, reveals the importance of thinking in avoiding the possible dangers of negative habits and in building up the power of resistance against vicious habits and opposition to them. Thought and ideation directed against the force of any kind of habit is a fruitful activity and struggle that broadens one's vision

.and is an important factor that strengthens will power

The various kinds of deviations are actually a result of the failure to think soundly and logically. Basically, it is due to negligence and the absence of carefulness in thinking that many people deviate from the highway of guidance to take to deviant paths. From this we realise why Islam has singled out thinking and contemplation as the highest level of worship, preferring an hour of genuine thinking to seventy years of .worship

That is because this kind of thinking is basically responsible for the eradication of ignorance and ignorance. It removes the veils that conceal truth and reality from the human spirit and gives depth and firmness to faith, and thereby does not leave any room for heresies, wrong customs and negative influences that may enter the core of .man's being

When man arrives at a veritable fact and truth as a result of thought and contemplation, he acquires a power of will that is the result of genuine thought and not something based on baseless fancies. This strengthened will enable him to control .his own behaviour and conduct

Thinking transforms inactive reason into a reason that is active with the coming to life .of effective ideas and notions which can prove to be very potent

Good and evil moral traits take roots in man's inner being as a result of repetition and exercise. Although they are acquired characteristics, their influence is as powerful and far-reaching as that of natural and innate qualities. When formed

by habit into a stable quality and trait, working like instinct they induce inner reflexes .that powerfully direct man's conduct

:Imam Hasan al-'Askari, the Eleventh Imam, may peace be upon him, said

(One's abandoning of a habit is something like a miracle.(١)

:Munn, in his work Psychology, writes

In an earlier discussion we referred to the fact that some motives developed in relation to physiological needs appear to function without such a linkage in adult life. To quote Allport again, the bond that remains in adult life is "historical, not functional." This concept has also been applied by Allport and others to the persistence of habits even though the motives which originally led to their acquisition are no longer .operative

It appears, at times, that habits have themselves acquired the status of drives. Some possible examples of functional autonomy are persistence of sexual behaviour after the menopause, when estrogens are no longer present, persistence of a vocational activity after the individual has made his fortune and achieved distinction, and living to .eat instead of merely eating to live

In most instances of apparent functional autonomy there is a possibility that new motives have supplanted the original and that the habit in question is not, in reality, ...operating without extraneous motivation

In cases of functional autonomy... the habit is freed from at least its original motivation. Force of habit, on the other hand, is persistence of a particular way of satisfying a given motive. For example, if one has regularly satisfied the hunger drive by eating foods

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.Al-Majlisi, Biharal-anwar, vol. ١٧, p. ٢١٧ -١

prepared in a certain way, there is often resistance to eating foods prepared in some other way.

In other words, habit forces us "into a rut." This phenomenon is often referred to as "force of habit", as though habits once formed act somewhat as drives, impelling us to continue the accustomed ways instead of taking up new ways of satisfying our motives.

James may have exaggerated somewhat the permanency of our habitual modes of behaviour, for people often do change their prejudices and, during war or other emergencies, their ways of living. However, there is usually a very strong resistance to change. Anyone who wishes to change the behaviour of an adult must take into consideration this tendency to resist well-formed habits, even when these have become outmoded or dangerous.(1)

The Approach of Islam

Though habit is a gift that human nature has been blessed with and which directs a significant part of man's efforts in new and innovative fields, despite its great role, in the absence of awareness it may take the form of a deceptive and deviant tendency that results in the corruption and perversion of the spirit.

When Islam arose on the horizon of pagan Arabia, it was dominated by various harmful customs each of which was alone sufficient to destroy a nation.

In that dark era when human awareness and consciousness were darkened by vicious customs and perverse habits, Islam, with a great leap, which was an unprecedented phenomenon in itself, shook the society out of its state of slumber and neglect and called upon

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۱- Munn, Norman Leslie, Psychology: The Fundamentals of Human Ad justment.

.the people to abandon customs and irrational and unreasonable practices

A society that was sunk in various kinds of superstitions and savage customs emancipated itself from the chains of wrong and absurd practices through the teachings of the Prophet of Islam, may God bless him and his Household. Though it had developed in an environment devoid of any educative or formative influence, it soon abandoned all the customs and ways of its ancestors to begin a new life that was free of the dominance of perverse social customs and which held out t};e .promise of felicity and happiness

The method of the holy founder of Islam in liberating mankind from the bondages of social environment which had rendered incapable its inner and outward sensibilities, suspended its rational faculties and blocked its path of growth, was, to put it simply, to remove the many spiritual curtains that obscured its vision. He called the attention of the people to certain tangible, observable realities and, by relying mainly on their faculty of reason and thought, induced them to resume the interrupted process of thinking with the help of firm arguments and proofs. In this way they were made .capable of perceiving realities and rational verities and of discovering facts

Ultimately it was with the means of this great historical leap that the society was able to free itself from the indignity of superstitions and savage customs and man was .emancipated from unmistakable ignorance and misguidance

In that dark age, there existed no force that could counter

injurious customs, break the hold of superstitions, open new vistas beyond the .barriers of existing customs, and relate human intellect and insight to realities

Islam adopted a special strategy prior to the building of a felicitous society, which was to demolish the power of custom. This included those habits which had to do with thought and belief as well as those which related to conduct and behaviour. Those habits which were relatively more harmful and dangerous-such as polytheism-were .attacked first and eradicated and dealt a decisive blow

Other vicious social customs, which aside from their hold over the public mind were linked to economic conditions-such as slavery, usury, consumption of alcoholic drinks-were dealt with a gradual and milder approach. In this case, it adopted a step-by-step strategy. As a result, the people became gradually trained in self-control and the ground was fully prepared for spiritual purification and edification; and this is the most .productive approach for the making of individuals in a society

:Prof. Carrel, the well-known French scientist, writes

Before everything we must remove the impediments in the way of spiritual growth. Before we move ahead on the road of edification we must drop these habits and vices that paralyse spiritual growth. But what should we do once these impediments have been removed? Thereafter we should begin spiritual development in accordance with .the genuine proclivities of life

Man has the amazing advantage that he can, if he wants to, form his body and soul with the help of his consciousness. However, such a

.task requires a special tactic

One can learn to control oneself in the same way as one can learn to pilot an airplane. Only those who are masters of their own selves can take up this training. It is not necessary to be learned or intelligent in order to acquire psychic growth. All that is needed is that one should really want it. Without doubt no one can carry out this task alone and everyone stands in need of guidance and counsel at some moment in life. But in developing and organising one's intellectual and emotional activities, which are .the essence of personality, one cannot benefit from the help of others

The first principle is not the development of rational faculties but the building of one's emotional infrastructure on which all other psychic factors are based. The need for (better conduct is no lesser than the need for the visual and auditory senses.(۱

:Ali, may peace be upon him, said'

At the beginning obtain self control through abstention from sins and vices. Then it will (be easier for you to habituate yourself of the obedience and service of God.(۲

Acquire control over yourself by abandoning (bad) habits and fight your desires so (that they become subject to the power of your will.(۳

Islam makes use of the force of habit as an effective means for man's spiritual training and for implementing its program for the creation of happiness. Once it has created living ties between God and human hearts and sown in them the

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Carrei, Alexis, Reflexions sur to conduite de la vie, Pers. trans., pp. ۹۸-۹۹. (London: -۱ .George G. Harrap Co., ۱۹۶۶), pp. ۱۸۵-۱۸۶

.Al-Amidi, Ghurar al-hikam, p. ۵۰۸ -۲

.Ibid -۳

seeds of virtue and human merit, it transforms them into habit and custom. All religious customs spring from inner yearning and the core of the human soul. Then this inner yearning is converted into a specific conduct and practice with clearly defined features and characteristics. Gradually it takes the form of a conscious habit based on full consciousness. At the same time this change and transformation saves the human being from what would otherwise be an unbearable and exhausting .exercise

Childhood and Habit

The recommendation of Islam concerning making children gradually used to religious duties and higher virtues and restraining them from sinful conduct constitute a powerful means for creating a firm and stable foundation of faith and piety in their spiritual personality. The implementation of such an educational program to a .substantial degree will neutralise the harmful effects of environment in later years

:The Noble Prophet, may God bless him and his Household, said

(Accustom your children to prayer when they reach the age of seven.(١

:Imam al-Sajjad, may peace be upon him, while counselling his children said to them

Refrain from Lying in big and small matters and in jest and serious talk; for when a (man lies in petty matters he will be emboldened to lie in bigger matters also.(٢

:Imam al-Sadiq, may peace be upon him, used to say

Impart religious education to your children as soon as you can and before your (opponents take a lead over you and plant wrong and false ideas in their minds.(٣

:Bertrand Russell writes

Every bad habit acquired is

۱- Al-Nurri, Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, vol. ۱, p. ۱۷۱.

۲- Al-'Amili, al-Hurr, Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, vol. ۳, p. ۲۳۲.

۳- al-Kulayni, al-Kafi, vol. ۶ p. ۴۷.

a barrier to better habits later, that is why the first formation of habits in early infancy is so important. If the first habits are good, endless trouble is saved later. Moreover, habits acquired very early feel, in later life, just like instincts; they have the same profound grip. New contrary habits acquired afterwards cannot have the same force; (for this reason, also, the first habits should be a matter of grave concern.(١)

Chapter ٢: Man's Most Distinctive Merit

point

There are numerous urges rooted in man's nature each of which plays an important role in his welfare and development. The greatest power that moves the wheels of life and motivates individuals comes from the urges whose source lies within their being.

As long as the bonds that relate a person to life are there, he does not cease to crave and the flames of desire keep burning in his heart. All the continuous hardships and pains that he bears and undertakes are for the sake of satisfying his inner desires. As soon as one of his desires is fulfilled, another sprouts in his heart, I impelling his body to action and effort and compelling him to begin a new activity and endeavour.

Man cannot find the path of happiness solely through the guidance of nature. The animals, on the other hand, traverse the course of their development through innate guidance by relying upon their instincts, by the help of which they regulate and discipline their lives. It is instinct that determines the functions of every animal

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١- Russell, Bertrand, op. cit., p. ۵٠

species in accordance with its laws and they do not stand in need of education and .training for knowing how to regulate their lives

However, in the case of the human being instinct is not capable of assuming this regulating role as in the case of animals and protecting him from deviation and destruction. It is reason and intellect, man's primary guide, that distinguishes him from other animals in showing him the path of life. It is through intellect and thought that man can recognise the path of his felicity and direct his efforts towards this end, .until he attains to the highest goal that is worthy of him

The caravan of humanity makes its onward journey with the guidance of intellect and thought, and it is with the assistance of reason that humanity solves its vital problems, conquering a new front every day in its struggle the problems posed by nature. In the great battlefield within the human spirit there is always a tough battle going on .between reason and instinct

These two powers are pitched in a relentless battle in which each of them seeks to overpower the other. In order that we may benefit from our inner powers and remain secure from their harm, we must bring instincts under the domination of reason, to which all other urges, impulses and motives of ours must submit in complete obedience. It is reason which is our most invaluable asset that reveals to us the real dangers that we face and

gives an order and discipline to life by teaching us the right way of employing our inner powers.

Of course, the intensity of desires is not the same at different stages of life and the character and configuration of the urges and motives changes according to age, conditions and circumstances.

In the same way as it possible for man to lay the foundations of his welfare on the basis of reason and will power without allowing the dangerous internal enemy to dominate his soul, it is also possible that he may be overcome by rebellious urges and be ultimately drowned in the dark and terrible vortex of corruption and decadence.

Hence if he is interested in his own welfare he must build a firm shield to protect his soul from the harm of delusive urges and plan his course from the very beginning. He should know where the blind alley of desires would ultimately land him so that by the means of giving a system to his thoughts he may spend the springtime of life in the shadow of virtue and piety; for without sacrifice and forbearance, which are essential to life, it is not possible to spend a ١ifetime with purity and dignity.

Someone who gives special care to the principles of human virtue from the beginning of his rational existence, getting used to avoiding vices, develops his spiritual capacities in the best possible manner. For him the continuation of this policy will be easier at the more mature stages of life.

After passing safely out of the critical frontiers of youth, the dangers of deviation will be reduced and the person will become somewhat immune against corruptive .influences

An absolute freedom in regard to satisfaction of inner desires, in addition to leaving evil and undesirable effects on the individual's soul and personality, also weaken the very foundations of social security. Hence, in order to attain personal welfare and happiness, as well as to protect the order of society, it is necessary to overlook a part .of one's desires

:Professor Alexis Carrel says

We have not yet learnt to submit to the laws of life in the same way as we submit to the laws of physics and gravity. There is a tragic conflict between human freedom and the laws of nature; a conflict to which modern man is prey, for man wants absolute autonomy. Nevertheless, he cannot without peril make use of his freedom beyond its .permissible limits

Freedom, like dynamite, as an effective but dangerous means whose way of utilization has to be learnt. Fortunately, the one who can make use of it is someone who possesses reason and will. Accordingly, this submission to the natural laws involves the limitation of the freedom of will. Life is not possible without an internal .order

The conflict between human freedom and the consequents of natural laws necessitates an exercise in self-discipline. In order that we may deliver ourselves and our descendants from the danger of catastrophes, we must resist most of our wishes, expectations and desires. A

harmony with the order of the universe is not possible without sacrifice, and sacrifice is a law of life. It is by refraining from satisfying some desires that health and power can be secured. Greatness, beauty, and holiness cannot exist without sacrifice.

Everyone must sacrifice because sacrifice is one of the necessities of human life. This necessity has emerged from the time when instinct gave way to free intellect in our ancestors Every time that man has made total use of his freedom, he has violated the natural laws and faced severe punishment.(1)

The Capacities of the Intellect

The intellect is one of the greatest gifts of God to man and with which man has been blessed. God says in the Holy Qur'an:

It means: (O Prophet, declare that it is God Who has brought you out of non-being and given you existence and bestowed upon you hearing, vision and an aware heart (so that you should thank Him for His bounties), though there are few persons who are grateful to their Lord for His gifts. (67:23)

The Master of the Faithful, may peace be upon him, says:

The intellect is man's most precious asset, for it restores his dignity after his humiliation, uplifts him if he falls, guides him if he is lost and gives firmness and rectitude to his speech when he speaks.(2)

In Islamic teachings the intellect has been considered as man's 'inner' prophet and guide and as God's 'proof'. Imam al-Kazim, may peace be upon him, said:

God has appointed two kinds of guides for mankind. One is

1- Carrel, Alexis, Reflexions sur la conduite de la vie, Pers. trans., Rah-wa rasm-e zindagi, pp. 99-100.

2- Al-Amidi, Ghurar al-hikam, p. 212.

outward and manifest and the other is inward and hidden. The manifest proofs are the prophets, messengers and the holy leaders of the faith. The hidden proof is the intellect.(1)

Since the intellectual capacities of people are not of the same level and are different in degrees, every man on the Day of Judgement will be held responsible in proportion to his intellectual ability. The Fifth Imam said:

On the Day of Judgement God shall scrutinise the record of His creatures', conduct (with a severity) in proportion to their intellectual capacities in the world.(2)

In the present era man has been greatly fascinated by the wonderful accomplishments of reason in the form of scientific discoveries, considering them the ultimate purpose and end of life. This enchantment has dealt an irremediable blow to the role of the intellect and its place in human life. It has caused him to ignore and neglect the power and faculty which has a direct connection with the supra- sensible and the Source of being.

Had the enchanted man seen the distant and wider horizon and ventured into the vast panorama of the supra- sensible, he would not have stopped at the fascinating manifestations of reason. Islam is fully cognisant of the real worth and capacity of the intellect and the scope of its activity.

It is on the basis of this knowledge that it has given so much care to the training and growth of the intellect so that it may view the realities of existence with thoughtful

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۱- Al-Kulayni, al-Kafi, vol. ۱, p. ۱۶.

۲- Ibid., "kitab al-'aql wa al-jahl."

care. The Qur'an asks the intellect not to hold on to anything which has not been proved with certainty and beyond doubt. It requires the intellect not to accept .anything until there is a clear and decisive proof to justify such acceptance

And follow not that which thou hast no knowledge of; the hearing, the sight, the (heart-all of those shall be questioned of. (۱۷:۳۶

This express warning clearly underlines the necessity of making sufficient investigation before accepting anything as true. Similarly, the Qur'an points out the deviant character of those who do not base their beliefs on certainty and merely :follow their conjectures and presumptions. It says about them

(They follow only surmise, and surmise avails naught against truth. (۵۳:۲۸

Thereupon by adopting a firm approach based on an unshakeable reasoning it demolishes the intellectual foundations of blind imitation and surmise. It warns the blind and unquestioning followers who blindly imitate the creed and beliefs of their .ancestors that their approach is sheer folly

They say, 'No; but we will follow such things as we found our fathers doing.' What? (And if their fathers had no understanding of anything, if they were not guided ? (۲:۱۷۰

These exhortations are aimed to develop a critical mind and to put the intellect back in its true role by rejecting reliance on surmise and conjecture. By this means it seeks to habituate the intellect to discipline and critical scrutiny in its field of action, so that thereby it may regulate the various faculties and set in order the

ideas and conceptions under its dominion. The kind of thinking that Islam requires is not one of an abstract kind removed from concrete realities that takes the form of .philosophical speculation

By calling attention to the signs (ayat) of creation it seeks to awaken the intellect so that man may employ his conscious faculties to contemplate profoundly regarding the signs of Divine Majesty and Wisdom manifested in the system of creation. It is a thinking that is free from fantasy, free and perceptive of realities, not one which is lost in the dark wilderness of fancies. It is thinking that links man, with his perception and senses, to the Divine Spirit that circulates through the entire world of being, and this is .the highest merit of the intellect

:Spinoza, the European philosopher, writes

The highest thing which the mind can understand is God, that is to say, Being absolutely infinite, and without whom nothing can be nor can be conceived, and therefore that which is chiefly profitable to the mind, or which is the highest good of .the mind, is the knowledge of God

Again, the mind acts only in so far as it understands and only in so far can it be absolutely said to act in conformity with virtue. To understand, therefore, is the absolute virtue of the mind. But the highest thing which the mind can understand is God (as we have already demonstrated), and therefore the highest virtue of the mind (is to understand or know God.(١

The ultimate

Spinoza, Ethics, in Man and Spirit: The Speculative Philosophers; ed. by Saxe – ١ .Commins and Robert N. Linscott, p. ١٧۵

purpose of thought and inquiry in Islam is to cure the human heart and to lay the foundation of life on truth and justice. When a person arrives at a certain conclusion through thinking and is made profoundly conscious of its implications, he puts it into action and implements it in his practical life. Once that dynamic conviction informs his thought, behaviour and faculties of perception, he is prepared for a serious struggle .against every indignity that compromises the real worth of the human being

Although the intellect is the best guide and the biggest source of discernment, it loses its brilliance as a result of the curtain that obfuscating desires and lusts draw over the intellect and obstruct its light. Then the intellect practically loses its capacity of :guidance. The Qur'an refers to the misguiding role of desires and lusts in these words

Then (O Prophet) if they do not respond to thee, know that they are only following their desires: and who is further astray than he who follows his desire without (guidance from God? Surely God guides not the evildoers. (۲۸:۵۰

(Nay, but the evildoers follow their own desires, without knowledge.... (۳۰:۲۹

Had the Truth followed their desires, the heavens and the earth and whosoever is in (them had surely corrupted. (۲۳:۷۱

Hast thou seen him who has taken his desire to be his god, and God has led him astray (out of a knowledge. (۴۵:۲۳

Without doubt, to overcome and control one's desires and negative urges is a very .difficult task

Only with persisting efforts and exercises can one keep the rebellious passions in check and make them tractable and subject to reason. This is the way to overcome the tyranny of desires and to benefit from them in a right and worthy manner. The Noble Prophet, may God bless him and his Household, once addressing a group of :warriors returning from the battlefield said to them

Bravo to those who have accomplished the minor jihad and who yet remain to wage' the major jihad!' He was asked, 'O Messenger of Allah, what is that major jihad?' He (replied, 'That is the jihad against the self.(۱

He who attains bliss and nearness to God is one who is vigilant over his violent and dangerous urges and one who does not allow his carnal motives to dominate his .intellect and turn him to impiety and aberration

But as for him who fears the station of his Lord and forbids the soul its desire, surely (Paradise shall be the refuge. (۷۹:۴۰-۴۱

?Is Conscience a Product of Internalised Prohibition

Another major moderating agent of the instincts and impulses of the human psyche is moral conscience. Since the beginning of man's appearance on the earth until today long ages have passed and man has throughout been inclined towards goodness and abhorred vice. He has always heard an inner moral voice calling from within called 'conscience'. His rational life throughout the ages has existed by the side of the life of .conscience

When man can distinguish between thorns and flowers, avoiding the former and ,relishing the latter

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.Al-Saduq, Ma'ani al-akhbar, p. ۱۶۰ -۱

when he can distinguish between filth and cleanliness, certainly he does not confuse between virtue and vice. The fundamental nature of the conscience is one of the most .attractive phenomena of creation

Man in a state of spiritual equilibrium is attracted to honesty and justice and is repelled by dishonesty and injustice. In fact moral conviction is more pronounced than rational conviction, which has a definite value for ascertaining facts. That is because the mind is well aware that the knowledge of external objects perceived by it, which carries the stamp of conviction put on it by the intellect, pertains to a reality separate from and external to the mind, where as the certainty created by the conscience stands above the kind of certainty that goes with perception and observation. In the .case of moral conviction, the object is felt as a part of the subject

Some psychoanalysts, like Freud and his followers, deny that moral conscience is inherent in man. They believe that repressed wishes and social inhibitions that become deposited in the unconscious mind make up what is called 'conscience'. In other words, conscience is a product of civilisation and has no essential roots in the .human psyche

Freud in his psychological investigations and analysis of various phenomena looks for sexual roots and pays no attention to other inner factors that form the source of good .and bad actions

There has been no society in the world that may consider dishonesty, injustice and breach of trust as something good and honourable, or

honesty, justice and loyalty as bad and improper, or one which should consider its .welfare and felicity to lie in vices and moral evils

Freud's theory would be applicable if man had learnt to distinguish between good and evil through experience. But those virtues and vices which have been recognised by all men on the surface of the earth, civilised and savage, and even by peoples ignorant of the teachings of prophets and reformers, can never be said to be products .of social prohibitions and repressed impulses

Freud's denial of the innate nature of conscience-in the sense understood by ethics- and his degradation of the human being to an assembly of purely physical impulses and instincts, leads him inevitably to a total negation of all moral values and spirituality as well as the worth and sublimity of man's sacred urges so active in the depths of his psyche. This denial makes all its manifestations, such as compassion, justice, goodness, and helpfulness for the weak and the helpless, meaningless and .absurd

On the basis of such a doctrine, no one can take a step towards the world of spiritual and moral values without repressing his natural urges and instincts and forego pleasures by relying on his will power. Rather, according to it, all inner restraints are .totally a product of external forces of social compulsion

Should the conscience be considered a product of the forces of external environment, the actions of those who without any selfish benefit in view voluntarily deny themselves many pleasures for the

sake of attaining to higher ideals and goals, and put up with pains and sufferings in the way of higher interests, remain unexplained by Freud's inadequate ideas, which view them as a subterfuge of the unconscious as a compensation for repressed wishes. The majesty of surrender to the guidance of the conscience will always .remain a difficult and insoluble enigma for such theories

The great reformers who have been humanity's vanguard have drawn the people to the world of human purity. The people too did not submit to these leaders in the way tyrants and strongmen are obeyed. Man takes to the path of merit and edification voluntarily and out of his free will and love for sublimity, and he refrains from carrying out some of his carnal impulses without confronting any psychic complex. It is with voluntarily zeal and enthusiasm that he responds to his sublime human feelings and performs goodly services which have not been forced upon him by custom, religion .and society

These are facts which show that man's inner psychic reality is not made up of a dark, pleasure-seeking principle pursuing merely the fulfilment of base desires; rather there is also grounded in him the urge for the highest good. There is a principle within him that is an independent source of virtuous actions and conduct. It is the conscience that reminds him that everything in life is not to be sought for selfish ends and that life .is not mere pursuit of desires

There are many individuals in

the world who consider a life devoid of conscience to be a disgrace and an affront to their personal dignity as human beings. They are prepared to forego life and embrace death but are not ready to violate their conscience. When they perform a good deed by following their inner impulse, they have such a profound feeling of its worth and beauty that they would not be prepared to exchange the value of that moment of life .for the entire world

Had the foundation of man's personality been a subjective principle of an infantile character in which the pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain are the only functions that count, man's science and industry would not have attained such a level .of progress and development

The Domain and Role of Conscience

Conscience seldom makes any error in its judgements. The various errors of human beings in their social life either result from the errors of reason and the senses or are a consequence of the conscience losing its power of resistance against violent .impulses

Therefore, the numerous errors observed in the different walks of human life are not related to any weakness or misjudgement on behalf of conscience, because this innate faculty does not play any role outside its domain of activity. Conscience examines the conclusions and data provided by reason and the sensory faculties and .its judgement is based on these

A person with a pure and wholesome nature is repelled by crime and sin. Nevertheless it is possible that under the influence of certain factors he may

become tainted by sin and vice and these may cast a shadow of shame and guilt over him. But after the offence has been committed once man turns to himself and consults the most sublime light within him, he realises the vicious character of that which happened and a burning flame leaps up from the depths of his being. A painful feeling of guilt and shame envelops his entire being. This is what is called conscience, which censures the offender even after he has been punished and torments him .continually with the lashes of regret

Conscience is not only a reliable guide in the course of life, it is a just and honest witness over man's conduct that keeps a watch over it and declares what it observes. A person may say with the tongue something which is the opposite of that which is in his heart, or he may hide his secret thoughts by controlling his apparent movements. But he has no power to silence the voice of his conscience or to stop it from reproaching him. Conscience cannot be deceived. It may be possible to elude it through some mental deception or trick or even to put it to sleep for a time. But once it wakes up and studies the sinful record of one's deeds, it declares with perfect candidness the ugly character of his vicious conduct and flogs him severely with the .whip of guilt and regret

.'A human being loves nothing more dearly than its own 'self

One who suffers the most painful torture of guilt is in fact one who has been disowned and abandoned by his own 'self'. He comes to feel as if his crime and sin were a fire that consumes his being in its fierce flames. Hence conscience is the most effective .agent in avoiding crime and sin

If the intensity of the pangs of conscience that he suffers were beyond his power and tolerance, a feeling of anxiety and agitation fills all his conscious state, overshadows all other feelings of satisfaction. The tormenting pressure of the conscience in some cases disturbs the normal course of the person's psychic activities and give rise to pathological conditions. The study of psychic tensions in some cases of dementia that have been studied show that such persons are those who lost their sanity and rational faculties as a result of the shattering torment and pressure of conscience resulting from commission of crimes and sins and have fallen into the furnace of guilt and .regret

At times one's improper wishes and impulses are so strong that man wants to deceive his conscience and to stall its activity. It is a marvellous characteristic of the conscience that it can put up a steadfast resistance against powerful impulses and fight against them. As long as there occurs no failure in its resistance to the pressure .of instincts, it carries on its effort and does not neglect its duty

:Henri Baruk says

Conscience is strong in its persistence, and even when its light

becomes so dim that it ceases to be visible it remains more or less vigilant and aware. And even at times when its light can be perceived with difficulty, it can, all of a sudden, (begin to shine with a dazzling brilliance.(١

Ultimately, everyone who has disobeyed his conscience and deviated from the course of nature has always faced mental torment and anxiety. On the contrary, one who heeds the warnings of the conscience and obeys its commands finds mental peace and tranquillity, the peace and tranquillity in whose search the misguided run after .every mirage

The Qur'an and the Voice of Nature

Today many scientists reject Freud's view and consider the conscience to be an innate part of man's nature. The thinkers who have employed the powers of sound and active intellect for acquiring the knowledge of man and the universe have affirmed the innate phenomenon of conscience. They have been led to the conviction that inclination toward virtue and repulsion from vice has natural roots in our being, that the system of creation has placed this blessed asset in the innate nature of every .human being

Here, along with some relevant verses of the Glorious Qur'an, we shall cite the views .of some Western thinkers and scholars concerning this matter

The Holy Qur'an considers man's inner faculty of discrimination between good and .evil, virtue and vice as a Divine inspiration invested in his being

By the soul, and That which shaped it and inspired it to lewdness and god-fearing! ((۹۱:۷-۸

:Jean Jacques Rousseau writes

Cast your eyes over every nation of the

Baruk, Henri, Psychoses et nervroses, Pers. trans., Bimariha-ye ruh wa sasabi - ١
.(Tehran, ١٣٤٣) by 'Abd al-Husayn Mirsipasi, p. ٧٣

world; peruse every volume of its history; in the midst of all these strange and cruel forms of worship, among this amazing variety of manners and customs, you will everywhere find the same ideas of right and justice, everywhere the same principles of morality, the same ideas of good and evil.... There is therefore at the bottom of our hearts an innate principle of justice and virtue, by which, in spite of our maxims, we judge our own actions or those of others to be good or evil, and it is this principle that I call conscience...

Self-interest, so they say, induces each of us to agree for the common good. But how is it that the good man consents to this to his own hurt? Does a man go to death from self-interest? No doubt each man acts for his own good, but if there is no such thing as moral good to be taken into consideration, self-interest will only enable you to account for the deeds of the wicked; possibly you will not attempt to do more. A philosophy which could find no place for good deeds would be too detestable.... If such doctrines ever took root among us, the voice of nature, together with the voice of reason, would constantly protest against them, till no adherent of such teaching would plead an honest excuse for his partisanship...

The decrees of conscience are not judgements but feelings. Although all our ideas come from without, the feelings by which they are

weighed are within us, and it is by these feelings alone that we perceive fitness or unfitness of things in relation to ourselves, which lead us to seek or shun these things.... To know good is not to love it; this knowledge is not innate in man, but as soon as his reason leads him to perceive it, his conscience impels him to love it, and it ...is this feeling which is innate

Conscience! Conscience! Divine instinct, immortal voice from heaven, sure guide for a creature ignorant and finite indeed, yet intelligent and free; infallible judge of good and evil, making man like to God! In thee consists the excellence of man's nature and the morality of his actions; apart from thee, I find nothing in myself to raise me above the beasts- nothing but the sad privilege of wandering from one error to another, by .the help of an unbridled understanding and a reason which knows no principle

Thanks heaven we have got rid of all that alarming show of philosophy; we may be men without being scholars; now that we need not spend our life in the study of morality, we have found a less costly and surer guide through this vast labyrinth of human thought. But it is not enough to be aware that there is such a guide. We must know her and follow her. If she speaks to all hearts, how is it that so few give heed to her voice? She speaks to us in the

.language of nature, and everything leads us to forget that tongue

Conscience is timid, she loves peace and retirement; she is startled by noise and numbers; the prejudices from which she is said to arise are her worst enemies. She flees before them or she is silent; their noisy voices drown her words so that she cannot get a hearing; fanaticism dares to counterfeit her voice and to inspire crimes in her name. She is discouraged by ill-treatment; she no longer speaks to us, no longer answers to our call; when she has been scorned so long, it is hard to recall her (as it was to banish her.(۱

:Prof. Friedman says

The voice of conscience is not a product of education or training or some other agency; rather, it is a part of the human personality. Whoever that rises to a high and distinguished position in society or becomes a standard-bearer of humanity, it is the (voice of his conscience that guides him towards virtue and piety.(۲

:A psychologist says

Conscience is not a contrived reaction but a most profound agent inherent in the human nature. Despite various kinds of repressive efforts, men cannot silence or expunge the conscience. Moreover, the stability and extraordinary persistence of conscience, even in severe illnesses and in the course of madness and psychic disorders, and its survival even after the dimming of the light of intelligence, bear testimony, as said earlier, to its greatly significant and prominent position in the .human psyche

Some scientists ask themselves whether conscience

Rousseau, Jean Jacques, Emile, trans. by Babara Foxley (Everyman's Library, ۱۹۶۹), -۱ .pp. ۲۵۱-۲۵۴

.Friedman, Otto, Pers. trans., Rawanshi nasi dar khidmat-e siyasat, p. ۳۲ -۲

is not a product of education and upbringing or that of religion. But it must be pointed out that salient features of this conscience have been found in primitive rituals. The expression of awe and dismay accompanying the seeking of forgiveness in these primitive tribes and also in many idol-worshipping peoples bear witness to the ancient character of conscience which has been with man since his beginnings. A denial of this fact is tantamount to utter failure in understanding the human psyche.(۱)

The Holy Qur'an declares:

Have We not appointed to him two eyes, and a tongue, and two lips, and guided him concerning the two highways (of goodness and virtue and of evil and vice)? (۹۰:۸-۱۰)

We created man of a sperm-drop, a mingling, trying him; and We made him hearing, seeing. (۷۶:۲)

Samuel Smiles writes:

Conscience is that peculiar faculty of the soul which may be called the religious instinct. It first reveals itself when we become aware of the strife between a higher and a lower nature within us-of spirit warring against flesh-of good striving for the mastery over evil... To enjoy spiritual freedom of the highest kind, the mind must have been awakened by knowledge. As the mind has become enlightened, and conscience shows its power, the responsibility of man is increased...

Conscience is permanent and universal. It is the very essence of individual character. It gives a man self-control- the power of resisting temptations and defying them.... The only comprehensive and sustained exercise of self-control is to be attained through the

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۱- Baruk, op. cit., pp. ۶۷-۶۸.

ascendancy of conscience-in the sense of duty performed. It is; conscience alone which sets a man on his feet, frees him from the dominions of his own passions an propensities. It places him in relation to the best interests of his kind. The truest source of enjoyment is found in the paths of duty alone. Enjoyment will come as the .unbidden sweetener of labour, and crown every right work

At its fullest growth, conscience bids men to whatever makes them happy in the highest sense, and forbear whatever makes them unhappy.... Without conscience, a man can have no higher principle of action than pleasure.... A race so constituted, with intellect and ۱passions such as man possesses, and without the paramount influence of conscience to govern their deeds, would soon be consigned to utter anarchy, and terminate in mutual destruction. The greatest intellectual power may exist without a .particle of magnanimity

The later comes from the highest power in mans mind-conscience, and from the highest faculty, reason, and capacity for faith- that by which man is capable of apprehending more than the senses supply.... The great lesson to be learnt is, that man must strengthen himself to perform his duty and do what is right, seeking his happiness and inward peace in objects that cannot be taken away from his. Conscience is the conflict by which we get the mastery over our own failings. It is a silent working of the inner man, bat which he proves his peculiar power of

(the will and spirit of God.(1)

:The Qur'an declares

(I swear by the Day of Resurrection I swear by the reproachful soul. (75:1-2

In this verse the inner cry of reproach and blame that arises from the depths of man's conscience has been called 'the reproachful soul' (al-nafs al-lawwamah). This is the .'same inner faculty which the psychologists called 'conscience

:Prof. Otto Friedman writes

Someone may spend many hours drinking wine in a bar or while away his time on the gambling table or engage in playing tennis. In any case, while he is occupied with all such diversions he might have an inner feeling of disquiet which continuously torments him and deprives him from drawing any pleasure from his pastime. An inner voice reproaches him that you are wasting away the hours of your life. This voice .constantly echoes in his conscience

On the other hand, instead of engagement in such pastimes the thought may occur to one that it would be much better if he engages in the training of his children or tending his garden and plants. It is here that his conscience guides him towards good actions which are useful for himself as well as beneficial for others. It is here that one always keeps on comparing himself with others and his conscience keeps on reproaching him. The greater and the steadier one's obedience to the voice of conscience, the proportionately greater will be his creative power and spiritual strength and the greater his zeal and vigour in life. And the lesser

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.Smiles, Samuel, Duty (London: John Murray, 1926), pp. 19, 20, 21 -1

is one's attention to the voice of conscience, to the same extent he will be more violent and unrestrained.(۱)

The Holy Prophet, may God bless him and his Household,

One who is overwhelmed by self-reproach loses all peace.(۲)

It may happen that one loses his equilibrium in a moment of carelessness and his base impulses get the better of him. As a consequence he is rendered wretched and miserable and its regret and shame remains with him for a lifetime. Imam 'Ali, may peace be upon him, said:

How often does an hour of pleasure leave behind a long-lasting misery.(۳)

Human societies in all ages have benefited from the inner agency of conscience in times of need. Individuals who are devoid of the moral feeling, for whom virtue and vice have no significance and who see pursuit of pleasure, food and lust as the purpose of life are like pieces of straw carried away by the flood of animal instincts and have no credibility or standing in any society, nation or community. When someone is trusted with a job, the presence of conscience is the presumed guarantee of its being carried out. There should be a good measure of confidence that he will act according to his duty. Otherwise it is unwise to delegate a task to someone whose conduct is suspect from the viewpoint of conscience or opposed to conscientious behaviour.

Islam has paid special attention to conscience and it bases the efforts at the improvement and betterment of social conduct on the individual's conscience.

۱- Friedman, Otto, op. cit., pp. ۳۱-۳۲.

۲- Nahj al-fasahah, p. ۶۲۱.

۳- Al-Kulayni, op. cit., vol. ۲, p. ۴۵۱.

Islam tries to convince individuals to place a watchman in their inner souls which may restrain them from committing aggression and offence against others even in conditions of hostility and anger. The Qur'an warns human being in these words:

Let not detestation for a people move you to commit in justice. Be equitable-that is nearer to god-fearing. (۵:۸)

Accordingly no one has the right to aggress against others or violate the rights of others in any circumstances whatsoever. Positive law with the limited means at its disposal tries to restrain the human being from outside from committing acts of offence. But Islam lays great importance on cultivating and nurturing the conscience of individuals. With a developed conscience individuals themselves perceive the necessity of refraining from certain actions so that they may achieve spiritual edification and salvation. Without doubt, this kind of self-restraint motivated by religious faith and moral sense offers a surer means and a shorter way to the goal.

In the view of Islam the attainment of the higher goals of life is possible only through co-operation and mutual love between individual human beings. It invites the people to these virtues and asks them to base their relations on co-operation and love. In the light of such a teaching, everyone feels that his existence as a human being is like a lamp that lights up the horizons of humanity when he, happily and without any reservations, extends his co-operation and love to others.

Imam al-Sadiq, may peace be upon him, reports the Noble

:Prophet, may God bless him and his Household, as having said

It is the duty of every person to observe the seven rights of his brother in faith: (١) that one should not fail to show him respect and reverence; (٢) one should really love him from the bottom of one's heart; (٣) one should share one's belongings with him equally; (۴) one must refrain from backbiting him and mentioning unseemly things about him in his absence; (۵) one should visit him when he falls ill; (۶) one should attend his funeral on his death; (٧) one should not mention him except kindly after his (death.(١

Man listens to the summons of nature and discriminates virtue from vice when there isn't anything to obstruct the course of nature. A conscience in bondage and deprived of its free movement by the weighty chains of lust and position and power seeking impulses, cannot manifest its real character and be a trustworthy judge. Thus during crises of war and revolution and such extraordinary conditions conscience suffers terrible blows and its activity comes to a standstill. In such circumstances perverse ideas and doctrines emerge as the most potent dynamic force and the suppression of .the collective conscience results in irremediable losses and harms for mankind

There is a great difference between a conscientious person and a person without conscience; this difference is even greater than the one that separates man from other creatures. If fire with its quality, which is to burn, burns a human body, it

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.Al-Majlisi, Bihar al-anwar, vol. ١۵, "kitab al-ishrah," p. ۶١ -١

is a consequence of its essential nature. It has no consciousness that which it burns is a living creature, a human being that intensely feels the torment of burning. But whatever a person without conscience does is done with knowledge and consciousness. Cruelty, injustice and suffering inflicted by men on other human .beings are acts performed consciously

One of the things alters man's primordial nature and casts dark shadows on the luminous face of pure nature is repetition of sin. A brutal criminal commits many terrible crimes without feeling any psychic torment for his ugly conduct. Such a .sadistic condition is something quite exceptional

Society can attain social justice only when individuals accept an inner agent that may act as a judge and invigilator over their acts and comply with its commands. If all people in a real social unit that gives meaning to their humanity possess a common and identical ethos, that not only brings about a perfect condition of coexistence, but .makes them like parts of an organism and links of a mechanism

The Bedrock of Reason and Conscience

When the rebellious impulses try to undermine the role of reason and conscience and make man a captive of lusts, faith turns out to be the best support for relying upon. Faith is the greatest support and foothold of conscience and reason. With its support reason and conscience acquire the capacity to suppress rebellious instincts in all circumstances, resist the hostile pressure of desires and to overcome any kind of dangerous inclination. A human being armed with the

weapon of faith is one who, in the words of the Qur'an, "has laid hold of the most firm handhold that can never break."(1)

The function of theoretical reason on which metaphysics, natural science and mathematics are based, is to make judgements concerning reality. However, it is practical reason that forms the basis of the sciences of life and its function is to form judgements concerning the duties and responsibilities of man. The path and approach selected by the human being in life is related to the character of judgements made by practical reason.

One of the important factors that gives clarity of vision to the intellect is god-fearing (taqwa). The claim that god-fearing illuminates the intellect and opens the window of wisdom before man is a matter that does not relate to the theoretical intellect. It is with the means of god-fearing that man is able to discern the correct way of living and discover his own ailments and their remedies.

Since the domain of action of the practical intellect is the same as the realm of desires, impulses, and passions, their unbridled violence has a decisive effect on man's practical intellect and thought which have the function of forming clear conceptions of duty and that which is right or wrong. The uncontrolled passions raise a dense mist that obstructs the light of the lamp of the intellect. In the words of Hafiz Shirazi:

The beloved's beauty has neither a veil nor a curtain before it, but,

The dusts of the road must be

۱- The Qur'an, ۲:۲۵۶.

.made to settle before the sight may work

In Islamic teachings desire and passion have been considered hostile to the intellect because their hold weakens the power of the intellect and neutralises its influence. :The Noble Messenger, may God bless him and his Household, said

(Your worst enemy is the one between your two sides;(١)

:Imam al-Sadiq, may peace be upon him, says

.Desire is the intellect's enemy

:The Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali, may peace be upon him, says

(Most of the falls of intellects occur under the lightning bolts of greed.(٢)

When god-fearing takes hold of the heart, it puts desires and passions in chains, making them docile and tractable. As a result of it the intellect becomes free and active. This shows the effectiveness of taqwa in enhancing the vision and clarity of the .intellect

The Noble Messenger, may God bless him and his Household, mentions the following :characteristics while describing the qualities of men of faith

Among the salient merits of a person possessing faith is that he does not violate the norms of justice on account of resentment for someone. His attachment for someone does not make him take a sinful course. He is not a transgressor and does not oppress others. He does not accept falsehood though it should come from a friend and does .not deny his enemy's legitimate rights

(٣)

Man is completely free to utilise the precious assets of reason and conscience that he has been endowed with and to benefit from them. However, his ultimate freedom lies in overcoming some

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١- Nahj al- fasahah, p. ٦٦.

٢- Al-Amidi, Ghurar al-hikam, p. ١٩٥.

٣- Al-Majlisi, Bihar al-anwar, vol. ١٥, p. ٨٢.

of his natural desires; that is, when a part of his being- that is his reason and .conscience-dominates the other part, consisting of the natural instincts

Reason and conscience maintain their supremacy so long as there is no conflict between them and turbulent psychic impulses, which are easily kept under the control of these two faculties. These two have a greater power than external police authorities, for their orders are considered by the individual to be issued by himself .and hence he cannot rebel against himself by refusing to comply with them

However, a major difficulty arises when the domination of reason and conscience necessitates indifference to or repression of one of the inner instincts. In such a situation, in many cases, the resisting power of reason and conscience breaks down in front of the violent force of instinct. They are forced to withdraw leaving the field to the marauding forces of instincts. Whatever may be the conditions, man is always .threatened by his desires and passions

But the man with genuine faith in God, whose faith has enduring roots in the profound depths of his heart and who is especially attentive to religious aspects, governs his tumultuous instincts by relying on this faith. In dangerous moments of life and vis-à-vis the call of illegitimate desires he rejects his improper impulses, and, with perfect .authority and power, puts up steadfast resistance against rebellious passions

Sophistry and Rationalisation

Compliance with the edicts of reason and conscience and submission to the demands of justice and equity are not simple

tasks. Hence many persons who should comply with the call of conscience, submit to the judgements of sound reason in their encounter with moral, religious and scientific duties and in confronting facts and realities, and overlook some of their egoistic .interests, are tormented by acceptance of responsibility and the prospect of loss

This anguish, which results from the absence of real faith and moral courage, makes them suppress their conscience in the adversities of life. Thereafter, in order to escape psychic pressures, they resort to some kind of lame justification and rationalisation. Obviously when someone takes resort in this improper approach several times, the activity of the intellect suffers and is weakened. The person gradually gets habituated to sophistry and moves away from correct logical thinking. Then it takes the form of a negative habit and in the course of time emerges as an .enduring personal quality

Another group of people, in order to escape responsibility and to avoid confessing their mistakes, try to shift the responsibility for various matters and in regard to certain crucial situations of life on to others by finding justifications in their own .favour, seeking to close the issue by a one-sided judgement

These kind of improper judgements are not a result of negligence and absence of attention to the subtleties of an issue. Practically all deviant persons, the terrible character of whose acts is beyond any doubt, take resort in various kinds of justification and inadmissible rationalisation in order to explain and justify their inhuman

.acts

:Dale Carnegie writes

I have had some interesting correspondence with Warden Lawes of Sing Sing on this subject, and he declares that "few of the criminals in Sing Sing regard themselves as bad men. They are just as human as you and I. So they rationalise, they explain. They can tell you why they had to crack a safe or be quick on the trigger finger. Most of them attempt by a form of reasoning, fallacious or logical, to justify their anti-social acts even to themselves, consequently stoutly maintaining that they should never ".have been imprisoned at all

If Al Capone, "Two Gun" Crowley, Dutch Schulz, the desperate men behind prison walls, don't blame themselves for anything-what about the people with whom you (and I come in contact?(۱

At first every person has a feeling of guilt for having shelved the burden of responsibility or for violating moral and social norms. But the repetition of such mistakes and offences, by diminishing the feeling of the negative and vicious character of such acts, makes one accustomed to them. Thereafter, in all the crucial stages that follow, his psychic responses vis-à-vis the offence unconsciously lose their sensitivity and the person comes to have a perpetual feeling of immunity from .inner anguish and torment

The Noble Qur'an describes such wretched creatures who have lost their awake and sensitive intellect and conscience due to crime and the pursuit of selfish gain and have sunk so irretrievably in the slumber of neglect and the mire of decadence that nothing

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.Carnegie, Dale, How to Win Friends (New York: Simon and Schustar Inc., ۱۹۳۷), p. ۲۷ -۱

can make them think again properly and discern between good and evil, as being :more astray and inferior than beasts

They have hearts, but understand not with them; they have eyes, but perceive not with them they have ears, but they hear not with them. They are like cattle; nay, (rather they are further astray. Those-they are the heedless. (۷:۱۷۹

Chapter ۳: A Criterion of Human Values

point

Personality is that which makes every individual different from others and by means of which we determine the real worth and station of a human being. Despite the fact that all persons possess common characteristics as well as common reactions particular to the human species and are similar in regard to the social instincts, nevertheless, every one of them possesses certain congenital and acquired qualities .and certain particular gifts that distinguish him from the rest of his kind

Personality does not consist of certain abstract characteristics of a person; rather, it constitutes the totality of an individual on which his identity is based, making him distinct from other individuals. It is a unity comprised of a group of qualities and inner motives. Moreover, only those qualities of a person are considered to be part of his .personality which have some degree of permanence

Although the principles that govern the growth and development of personality apply equally to all, but when these principles are applied to two individuals the results obtained are not the same; when the personalities of the two are compared, the .difference and dissimilarity between the two is clearly noticeable

To

be sure, certain observable aspects of personality are susceptible to measurement, but it is not so simple to measure the deeper and inner aspects of personality and the .hidden motives and urges of a person

Some of the qualities play a more important role in the structure of personality than others. These qualities which are of a moral and ethical character are more significant from the viewpoint of personality. In fact, the 'character' of a person is his personality .when viewed from the moral angle

The impact of personality, its character and strength, as well as the acquisition of those qualities which go into the making of a person, play a more profound and fundamental role in the welfare and woes of individuals. This is so because human felicity and misfortune is dependent, more than any external factor, on the level of thinking, intellect, spiritual merits and the inner causes at work within an individual. The differences of social and financial status have no definite and decisive impact on .anyone's felicity

An individual's spiritual foundations and the development of his personality are directly related to his attachment to and evaluation of things. By nature he tries to establish a harmony between his personality and the objects to which he is attached, in order to become attuned to them. His behaviour and conduct are tuned to and in harmony with what he considers to be of greatest worth and value in life. The different hierarchies of values represent different ways of thinking and differences

of ethos. Here we have a way of judging the intrinsic worth of every person and a .criterion for measuring his personality

Those who base their success and happiness on materialistic values-both in respect of quality and quantity-directing their endeavours throughout life to the attainment of materialistic objectives, and totally neglect and reject the real values basic to the achievement of true happiness, they in fact shatter their human personality. There are many people who spend all their lives in unceasing pursuit of materialistic values, but are not ready to devote a moment of their time to discovering the invaluable .treasure represented by spiritual merits and virtues

Scholars have different views about the extent to which the problems of personality are related to social psychology. Some of them regard personality to be a product of hereditary and physiological factors. Some others consider personality to be totally a product of social factors. The truth lies somewhere between these two extreme .positions

Family, school and social environment constitute the three most potent factors in laying the foundations of personality and determining the character of a person. Modern psychology gives much importance to the little-understood phenomenon of personality-something that did not receive much attention in the old psychology. Without doubt, social factors play an important direct role in the constitution of personality and many of a man's qualities are those which have been formed by external environment. Few are those who can resist the power and influence of their .environment and swim against the current

Munn, in

:his work on psychology, says

We would possess a very different personality if we had been brought up by the Eskimos, the Sioux, the Balinese, or by some other cultural group. Not only would we dress differently, live in a different kind of dwelling, eat different food, use different implements and weapons, speak a different language, and have different social customs, but we would also have a very different conception of the world and of our own place within it. Our egos and our superegos would differ greatly from what they .are

Cultural anthropologists have rightly placed much emphasis upon the "socio-cultural matrix" in which personalities develop. Children reared in the United States, acquire a way of life, and with it, a personality, which an outside observer might well characterise as "typically American." But, even within this cultural matrix, aspects of personality may differ depending upon whether we are reared in the North or the South, the East or the West, whether we are reared in the country, in a city or a town, whether we have grown up in the slums or in the best residential section, whether our early life is spent in a house or an apartment; whether our parents are rich or poor, together or separated, cultured or uncultured, religious or irreligious; whether we go to a standard, substandard or superior school; whether we have, or do not have, close friends; whether they conform, or fail to conform, to the mores of our culture; .and so on

Such socio-cultural

p:۸۰

influences are focused upon a child from the moment of birth and they continue to influence him all the days of his life.(۱)

There are many instinctive activities which can generally be shaped and moulded by environmental conditions. Thus for the development of the creative aspect of these activities, it is necessary to alter and improve before anything else those conditions which can reinforce or weaken these essential activities. Also, from an educational angle and from the viewpoint of influence on habits, the effects of every human action must be properly analysed in order to understand how a certain inclination may be reinforced or checked.

From the viewpoint of laying the foundations of emotional growth and moulding a proper social environment, the years of childhood are the most important formative years. The early training is imparted through parents and other close relatives within the family. Right conduct and speech on the part of the teachers have a decisive impact on determining the pattern of the child's life and in contributing to the development of his personality and the blossoming of his inner capabilities.

On the contrary, improper and unprincipled methods of training harm the development of the child's personality and repress his inner capacities. The young seedling that has recently come out of the ground can easily be bent and made to grow in any direction that one wishes. The beauty and grace of the future tree depends on the attention paid to its development during the period when it is

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۱ - Munn, Norman Leslie, Psychology: The Fundamentals of Human Adjustment, pp. ۲۵۸.

.still a young plant

Similarly, the direction of development of personality can be determined in the early years of life and the future personality of the child formed by providing proper conditions and means. Hence it is possible to picture the future personality of a child and the type of his psychological reactions to adverse conditions that he may .encounter by studying the conditions of his family and his situation in it

The cause of the backwardness and stunted growth of an individual or society in life should be sought in the shortcomings of their personality. Today, specialists doing .research on personality, in some respects, also pay attention to deeper factors

The extent of a man's intelligence and problem-solving ability is revealed during critical situations. Those who also pay attention to their inner reactions in their decisions and activities attain a greater sense of self-assurance and independence and acquire a greater confidence in their own personality. As a result they are more efficient and effective than others who pay greater attention to external factors. Exclusive attention to external factors leads one not to pay the due attention to his own self. Thought and carefulness play an effective role in the development of the mind and intelligence and the edification of personality and give additional worth and .dignity to one's social visage

At a time when shallow and superficial people are after the satisfaction of their vain desires and aims, endeavouring to fulfil them by resorting to various kinds of means, the person with higher

goals becomes keener in his pursuit of spiritual delights by relying on the power of his intellect. Therefore, those who possess the power of thought and an active intellect and benefit from every opportunity to pursue their worthy and sublime thoughts, are nearer to true happiness in this world.

Schopenhauer says:

A calm temperament, optimism, energy and vigour are the most important factors responsible for man's happiness.

A wise man even in a state of isolation can enjoy the sweetest of moments with the means of his thoughts and fancies, whereas the ignorant man, no matter how much he should vary his diversions and undertake enormous expenditures, cannot free himself from the malaise that tortures his body and soul. The optimistic and patient man can in times of penury conduct his life with contentment and forbearance, whereas the greedy man, even if he should possess all the riches in the world, is always downcast and dissatisfied.

The man of vigorous thought and sound intellect refrains from superficial and transitory pleasures, to attain which the people of the world kill themselves.

Socrates that intellectual, once on observing the ornamental stuff that was put on exhibition remarked: "How many numberless things exist in this world of which man has no need." Hence the most important factor effective in the happiness of men is personality.[۱]

Personality should not be considered as possessing a single dimension or measured with a single criterion and standard. Such a wrong approach is hazardous and leads us away from facts. Many people when

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۱- Schopenhauer, quoted in Afkar-e Schopenhauer, p. ۵۲.

confronted with a certain inadequacy or defect neglect the wonderful compensating power of the other dimensions of their personality and equate the inadequacy of one of its dimensions as the defect of the total personality. Such a baseless notion drives them into a debilitating anguish, a condition that may further result in irremediable .harms and irreparable dangers

Many historical crises and much ruthless bloodshed in history have been the outcome of harmful prejudices based on a wrong conception of personality in which a single dimension is made the sole criterion. An unfounded pride inspired by such prejudice .has led to many regrettable events in the course of history

Many people, while possessing certain remarkable abilities, suffer from a deficiency in certain matters. This inadequacy becomes a hindrance in their activity and progress. At times they ascribe their psychological inadequacies to a bad luck, thus holding other factors responsible for their own weakness. As a consequence, they carry the burden of this weakness throughout their lives, whereas with a measure of will and .effort they could overcome that inadequacy and strengthen their spiritual values

As long as you continue to rationalise your own inadequacies and allow ruinous thoughts to occupy your mind, you shall be reinforcing them. Any success in this matter depends directly on the extent one is able to take a serious decision, for the possibilities of developing oneself are unlimited and promise extraordinary results. On the level of ideation, the important point is what kind of person one aspires to .become

This reality is revealed with transparent clarity in times of life when one has to make a critical decision, selecting a single course from among the various alternatives that .occur to the mind

There is always an intense conflict going on among the human urges and instincts. Each trying to pull us in a direction different from that of another- Thought and reflection resolve this conflict and replace these divergent goals with one integrated .objective

It should be remembered that there does not exist a finished and final personality behind the character, conduct and activities of a person. Rather, it is constituted of non-permanent and complicated habits and behavioural modes that gradually fall into mutual harmony with one another. Whenever there arises a new conflict between the urges, the mind endeavours to establish a kind of balance and equilibrium between .them and to bring about a state of truce

For this purpose, it sometimes brings about a compromise between the various urges and thereby obtains at least a temporary state of peace and satisfaction. Just like the physiological mechanisms that automatically come into action for establishing an equilibrium in the body whenever there occurs the smallest amount of disturbance, the mind, too, acts to resolve the complicated inner problems and avert obvious .dangers by resorting to the means at its command

For the purpose of achievement of mental balance and peace in a disturbed and baffled mind, there exist certain ways some of which are reasonable and satisfactory and some others that are

.irrational as well as harmful

:The psychologists offer the following analysis in this regard

An effective way of averting danger is to encounter and face mental conflicts and their consequences with utmost candidness and courage and reduce the intensity of this conflict and the pressure of some of the urges, thus bringing about such a reconciliation among them that they can enter the arena of consciousness without .causing any trouble

But often we cannot find an ideal solution for the resolution of these mental conflicts and are forced to take resort in such means as repression, introversion, extroversion, .and self-deception

Sometimes the mental conflicts remain unknown and indistinct, or they do not come to one's attention. In this case, they give rise to a particular kind of behaviour that does not harmonise at all with one's personality and the person concerned has no knowledge of this disharmony. As a result, his consciousness and self-perception get divided into two different streams, none of which is in harmony with the other, making .the person appear double-faced and odd to others

Thoughts, plans and urges are always in a state of conflict and instability in the human mind. Those who have a divided personality privately act in an incredible manner. The politicians who always scream and pretend to defend the working class belong to this group. "We should alleviate the hardships of the toiling class", they proclaim, but as soon as they succeed, they take measures which make the life of workers a thousand times gloomier and more

difficult. To this group belong all those who have two different ways of thinking and have two conflicting personalities.(1)

The Basic Role of Spirituality in Education

The vital role of education as the supreme factor responsible for the strength and vigour of societies has been admitted by all schools of thought. It is not possible to ignore its fundamental role in the welfare of individual men. However, what is crucial is the real meaning of 'education' as well as the educational principles and criteria that are acknowledged as standards for evaluating the individual's intellectual and spiritual personality and applied to guide human beings to a free and happy life.

Since man is made of the two constituents of spirit and body, we require an educational principle that may harmonise his bodily urges with the spirit. This principle can either be one based on religion or one that is a product of the human mind. When we compare the two, we clearly observe the primary and authentic character of the educational principle based on religion.

That is because the religious motive is innate in man's nature and is evident in him before he becomes the victim of various kinds of blindness. If there be no external factor to obstruct the course of his innate religious inclination, early in life its radiance illuminates man's heart and conscience. As a result, he makes himself conform to this inner urge, and with the increasing awareness of this hidden power he becomes ever more compliant to its dictates.

On the other hand, the philosophers, with

۱- Strecker, E. A., Appel. K. E., Wilkerforce, John, Persian trans. Rawanshinasi baraye hameh, p. ۲۰۹.

their divergent perceptions of facts cannot attain a unanimity of opinion regarding education and man's spiritual refinement. And even if supposedly such a unanimity were attainable, that cannot, as a matter of principle, serve as a means of educating .the masses who are incapable of understanding philosophical discourses

That is because the force of moral restraint should emerge from the depths of the human spirit in order to meet the demand of man's innate urges; otherwise the prescriptions of ethical philosophy, being a man-made product, are incapable of penetrating to the hidden reality that lies at the core of man's being and are thus .inadequate for educating individuals and leading them to a life of felicity

Even for individuals who accept to abide by them, these man-made rules would be a tiresome burden to be carried about. Hence, on this basis, we must admit the superiority of the religious principle-which is rooted in the depths of man's inner being and conscience and is an eternal reality that lies at the centre of his innate nature-over all other methods that have been suggested in the field of education, and adopt .it in order that human endeavour may attain its desired goals

It was through the admission of the pre-eminence of this principle that man found a convinced faith in his genuine duties before humanity fell into the captivity of materialism. As a consequence he became intensely committed to it, and all the most sublime of human souls in the course of history

have discovered the delight resulting from compliance to its commands and obeyed it .with dedication

Briefly, this is the same path as has been shown by the prophets and revealed scriptures, which allows human nature to flow in its true channel and satisfies all the aspects of man's being. Its objective is no other than to guide human nature to its goal of eternal felicity. Hence, if this primary principle be made the basis of education, all individuals would be able to advance on the path of development and perfection in .its light and remain secure from every kind of deviation

A glance at the people who lead a mechanistic existence-a phenomenon of this perverse era-reveals the fact that despite the remarkable advancements made by man in the field of science and the many breakthroughs made in the knowledge of physical nature and in unravelling its mysteries, he has, unfortunately, undergone a retrograde and decadent course in regard to the knowledge of himself. Not only this, he has failed to rescue his world-which is his only nursery and place of development-from devastation and wretchedness; rather, his multifarious sciences themselves have become a means of its destruction and chaos. Moreover, the human spirit itself .has fallen captive to profound ignorance in the valley of an illusory civilisation

The Western world has made man a means of its goals of industrialisation, and it takes what is means for an end in itself. As a consequence it has created a society based either on the

principle of conflict on the plane of the individual or that of conflict among social classes. None of these two kinds of societies are worthy of man. Man cannot attain his true humanity without resolving the contradiction between his own being and .civilisation

:Eric Fromm writes

Modern man's feeling of isolation and powerlessness is increased still further by the character which all his human relationship have assumed. The concrete relationship of one individual to another has lost its direct and human character and has assumed a spirit of manipulation and instrumentality. In all social and personal relations the laws of the market are the rule. It is obvious that the relationship between ...competitors has to be based on mutual human indifference

Not only the economic but also the personal relations between men have this character of alienation; instead of relations between human beings, they assume the character of relations between things. But perhaps the most important and the most devastating instance of this spirit of instrumentality and alienation is the individual's relationship to his own self. Man does not only sell commodities, he sells himself and feels himself to be a commodity. The manual labourer sells his physical energy; the ".businessman, the physician, the clerical employee, sell their "personality

They have to have a "personality" if they are to sell their products or services. This personality should be pleasing, but besides that its possessor should meet a number of other requirements: he should have energy, initiative, this, that, or the other, as his

particular position may require. As with any other commodity it is the market which decides the value of these human qualities, yes, even their very existence.

If there is no use for the qualities a person offers, he has none, just as an unsaleable commodity is valueless though it might have its use value. Thus, then self confidence, the "feeling of self", is merely an indication of what others think of the person, It is not he who is convinced of his value regardless of popularity and his success on the market.(١)

The Development of Personality in Islamic Thought

Every existent has an individuality special to itself, and nothing can possibly be conceived without taking into regard its individuality. Hence judgements and conditions apply only to an existent that possesses its own particular individuality. Moreover, the perfection of a being is realised in its outward and inward aspects only when it has a sensible as well as a spiritual personality. The sensible and outward personality of human individuals is evident, but their spiritual personality depends on certain human qualities and spiritual merits so that their being is not confined to their sensible personality.

This is true of individuals as well as nations and societies, which with their specific characteristics are scattered around different parts of the world. The spiritual personality of any society relates to the extent of its knowledge of realities and its approach to life.

It is essential for the development of personality to take into consideration all the human dimensions and potentialities, so that an overall

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١- Fromm, Eric, The Fear of Freedom (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul) pp. ١٠٢-١٠٣.

balance and equilibrium, necessary for a balanced growth, is achieved and a balanced personality is formed. The Islamic approach in this regard consists of taking into .consideration all the innate characteristics of man

It takes into view all his urges and instincts, and with a perfect knowledge of the capacities that man has been endowed with, it guides and develops them in a balanced manner. Neither it suppresses any capacity by diminishing its due role, nor gives any of them an undue predominance. It determines the extent of each capacity's role by keeping in view the overall welfare of the human being, so that the .human personality develops in an optimum manner

The human soul, like everything else in life, in its own orbit and within the totality that is man, is always in a state of growth and development in accordance with the laws of its nature. It grows and develops with every movement that it makes. During childhood years, the field of imagination is expansive, but the intellect is weak and closer to the world of the senses than to the world of the spirit. However, gradually there is a movement from the simple to the complex as he undertakes bigger tasks. Imagination then mingles with facts and draws closer to thought and intellection. As a .result of this movement, his maturity and constructive abilities constantly increase

If this perpetual development does not follow the course of Divine guidance and is not ,nourished properly, it inclines towards weakness and disease

requiring remedial measures. Because in the same way as the capacity to develop is innate in man, so also there is the vulnerability to degenerate and decay. Both of them are innate and none of them is imposed by anything outside the soul, and nature too, despite the apparent change associated with each of these two opposite directions, is .itself unchangeable

The guidance provided by Islam is the most sublime and the most valuable of approaches aimed at the development of personality and sublimation of nature, as well as mobilisation of the inner constituents of man's being in conformity with their .natural configuration

In the view of Islam, real development lies in movement towards truth and in uniting with the Divine glory and beauty. One who has been brought up and nourished by Islamic principles rejects all misleading temptations, whether they relate to the servitude to men, or submission to his own base lusts and desires, or to other power .in the world of creation

Human beings should develop their personality within the framework of this objective and elevate their consciousness, because this path of development and progress has been proposed by someone who is the Creator of man, Who is well aware of his nature and needs. It is vital for every person to know the situation of man and the ultimate end of his existence so that he may discover through this knowledge the role .of man, his relationship to the world, and the frontiers of his responsibilities

However, such an awareness

must be followed by action and movement and this knowledge must be transformed into a dynamic force, so that the inner self is mobilised toward the realisation of the ultimate purpose assigned to human existence in this celestial plan. It is then that man .can attain to an enduring sublime life commensurate with his divine destiny

Islam came to build a unique community that establishes God's law on earth, a community that should lead humanity and deliver it from deviate paths and misleading schools of thought that lead it into suffering, a community with a correct world view, which is the greatest means of man's progress. It offers a world view which is in tune and harmony with all the essential constituents of the human personality-i.e. intellect, thought, emotion, and all other elements of man's being and his faculties of perception-and is capable of bringing up intellectually and spiritually as well as from the viewpoint of conduct and action, unique and magnificent examples of .humanity

It reminds man that the pursuit of lusts leads the soul into a darkness where his light-the principle that draws him naturally towards human merit and excellence-is .concealed by the enveloping gloom

Accordingly, it is necessary that man should get rid of this obstructing darkness if he is to discover his genuine functions and identify the true and beneficial values, so that he may get a positive view of life and fulfil his urge for perfection by adopting a sound .educational policy

Finally, Islam intends to bring up an

integrated human personality which, on the physical plane, utilises all the possibilities offered by the world of physical nature and on the spiritual plane benefits from the unlimited opportunities offered by the world of spirit and immortality. It does not cease reminding the individual that within this corporeal, earthly frame there is a celestial light, a sacred fire, and a Divine breath that can raise him to the exalted .station of being God's vicegerent

The Constructive Role of the Intellect and Faith

Islam considers the faculty of the intellect to have a fundamental role in the development of human beings and emphasises its employment for free thought and action throughout life, so that every person may put to use his powers of cognition in order to realise his genuine humanity. Nevertheless, it does not place an excessive reliance on this fundamental element and does not consider it sufficient to extinguish the flames of desires. The intellect should not play an ineffectual role in the transitions of life and it must be capable of raising man from the animal plane to a plane above .the rule of instincts and lusts

From the viewpoint of Islam that which distinguishes man from other animals is not limited to his perceptual and rational faculties. Rather it is faith and a special mode of cognition that makes man superior to all other animals. Here he has been burdened with responsibility by the system of creation and so, in a way fitting his human functions, he must employ his faith and cognitive faculties throughout the ups

.and downs of life and in the conduct of his individual and social affairs

For his salvation and happiness man stands in need of a spiritual means that may give him a clear vision of life. That illuminating agent is insight in relation to the sacred Essence of God, which is the sole means that can remove the scales of ignorance and every kind of deviance from the eyes of the soul and bring about spiritual .resurrection

The faith in God produces many results of a positive character in human life. It is the source of the individual's freedom and a change that plays a crucial role in the growth of the human personality- When the effects of faith in God appear in all the vital functions, there is a decisive reduction in the pressure of animal urges that helps .liberate the individual from the terrible grip of the carnal self

That is because faith in the Sustainer makes the individual steadfast in his resistance to passing corporeal pleasures and expands the soul's capacities; whereas turning one's back to God and spirituality and inclining towards such pleasures produces emotional stagnation and the degeneration of one's spiritual personality, bringing man down from the sublime station of humanity and moral excellence to the .decadent level of savageness and ignorance

None of the systems of education that are products of the human mind has the power and ability to bring under control man's unbridled greed and psychic deviations, because these new systems of education rely solely on

.reason and science

;Max Planck, the well-known German physicist, says

Mankind in its daily life stands in need of a principle, a principle the need for which is more pressing than the thirst for scientific knowledge. It is necessary that man should possess a source of guidance other than that of pure reason. The law of causality is the guide of science. It is here that reason should give way to morality, and scientific (knowledge to religious faith.(۱

Accordingly, as long as the light of guidance does not illuminate the world's horizons and human hearts are not revived through the growth of the religious motive, human principles and doctrines cannot bring about the vigour and sublimity in society .necessary for it to shoulder the burden of civilisation and its crucial responsibilities

It should be noted that Islam never demands abstinence from the legitimate pleasures that have been created by God for the benefit of His creatures. On the one hand the Noble Qur'an declares that it does not befit the exalted station of humanity that man should get drowned in the fierce waves of lust, sink into neglect and :ignorance of the realities of life, and curtail the scope of his thought

Tempting and pleasing to (short-sighted) people is the love of carnal lusts-women, children, heaped-up piles of gold and silver, horses of mark, cattle and tillage. All that (is the enjoyment of the present life, but God-with Him is the fairest resort. (۳:۱۴

On the other hand, it not only acknowledges the role of material

p: ۹۷

۱- Planck, Max, 'Ilm beh kuja mi ravad, p. ۲۳۴.

things in the life of man, but even condemns the negative kind of asceticism and :abstinence from lawful pleasures

Say (O Prophet): 'Who has forbidden the ornament of God which He brought forth for His servants and the good things of His providing?' Say: 'These in this world are for those who have faith and on the Day of Resurrection they shall have purer and better than these. 'So do We expound Our sings for a people who have a clean perception (and knowledge. (۷:۳۲

Submission to transitory materialistic pleasures amounts to degrading the faculty of thought and granting them a fundamental role in life. The glamour of mundane enjoyments draws a veil over the hearts of hollow and misguided persons lacking will that stops the Diving light from shining upon it. As a result, they are deprived of .thought and constructive ideas without realising it themselves

Islam gives to man a wholesome personality, the power of thoughts and a valuable stability, so that the individual may properly fulfil his basic role in the making of himself and society and liberate himself from the bondage of lust without being deprived of .bodily pleasures

The person presented by Islam as a finished product of its education is a thoughtful human being, positive, active and disciplined, a human being whose cognition, thoughts and conduct, and, ultimately, all the aspects of whose life are informed with a peculiar moderation and harmony. His free and well-developed psyche brings about an inner balance that not only gives him the

capacity not to get submerged in earthly pleasures and the world of matter but to rise to the most sublime peaks in its ascent towards its sacred ideal by elevating itself to a .sphere above the gravity of the mundane

In Islamic teaching, self-purification is the first stage in man's ascent towards human merit and excellence. The Noble Qur'an mentions it as the preparatory stage for -instruction in knowledge and science

It is He Who raised up from among the unlettered Arabs a Messenger from among them, to recite His signs to them and to purify them (from the filth of vices and corrupt morals), and to teach them the Book and the Wisdom, though before that they were (all in manifest error. (۶۲:۲

This basic principle is a criterion and measure for gauging man's reality. Knowledge and material power are not worthy criteria for measuring man's reality, because they .are not comprehensive and take into consideration only a single aspect of that reality

Obviously the results of any measurement are erroneous to the extent of the error in the measuring standard. Of course, knowledge is man's distinctive characteristic, a genuine human product and achievement, and the foundations of his life rest upon knowledge. But if man should be rich in respect of the genuine human aspect that lifts him over the world of the corporeal to a higher realm, he is easily capable of compensating what he lacks from the viewpoint of knowledge and learning, whereas knowledge alone cannot compensate for a lack

.of humanity

Whenever man has been able to make an ascent through self-purification and in respect of the human criterion while also benefiting from the results of science, he .has been truly capable of making an all-round progress on an extensive level

Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, may peace be upon him, says concerning the' :value of self-purification and acquisition of moral virtues

If, supposedly, we did not have to hope for paradise and fear from hell and had there been no promise of reward or any threat of punishment, it would still behove us to seek moral virtues and excellences, because the acquisition of desirable qualities and the practice of virtue leads to happiness and felicity in life and is one of the important (means of salvation.(۱

:He also says

Dominate your desires before they become violent and defiant, because if rebellious urges are allowed to grow in their aggressiveness and obstinacy, they will come to dominate you and pull you in whatever direction they like. In that case you will lose (the power to resist them.(۲

(One who is a slave of his lust is many times more abject than an actual slave.(۳

(One who dominates his desires preserves his human dignity and worth.(۴

:Will Durant says

Our urges and motives are like the wind that drives a sailing ship. However, the ship's sails should not be left to themselves, in which case they will carry us like slaves wherever they wish. Everyone in his lifetime has come across one of those who are caught in

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.Adab al-nafs, vol. ۱, p. ۲۶ -۱

.Al-Amidi, Ghurar al-hikam, p. ۴۹۸ -۲

.Ibid., p.۵۱۰ -۳

.Al-Nuri, Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, vol. ۲, p. ۲۸۷ -۴

.the bondage of greed, lust, or bellicosity

Unrestrained freedom of each quality is self-destructive. You have heard the story of the sons of Cyrus left free by their nurses to do anything they wished and who as a result grew up to be base and corrupt persons. Hence the domination of reason over desires and urges is the real essence of wisdom and the instrument of self-restraint. (Self-control is the most significant thing necessary for self-development.(١

The locus and criterion of responsibility throughout the Islamic system is free will. Man has been given the freedom of thought and the freedom to translate it into action, which is his distinctive characteristic، so that he may direct his effort, which is the real driving force behind progress, in the way of attaining true humanity.

Although man is not free in respect of the urges and drives that motivate him, he is completely free in regard to the manner in which they are satisfied. By the means of the will, which governs his acts and faculties of perception, he can turn to the higher plane of psychological and intellectual activity and develop an outstanding and worthy personality for himself, and with a constancy of effort, advance further each day towards human felicity and a respectable station in society. Or, on the contrary, he can corrupt and destroy his personality by nurturing his personal qualities on the basis of conformity to destructive urges.

:Imam al-Sadiq, may peace be upon him, said

If two days of someone's life are equal

١- Durant, Will, The Pleasures of Philosophy, Persian trans. Ladhdhat-e falsafeh, p. ٢٢٨.

in respect of the development of higher human qualities, he is a loser in the bargain of his life. The person whose today is better spent than his yesterday is one who is worthy of being envied by others. But the one whose every day passes in the condition of perpetual retrogression is one who is deprived of God's mercy and favour. And the one who does not find a progress within himself in respect of spirituality and moral virtues and merits. Such a person is prone to loss and retrogression, and death is better that life for a person who treads the path of (retrogression.(۱

Paul Clement Jagot writes

In order to avoid mental dispersion and the division of personality, which easily put out the idea of self-control, one must resort to a scrupulous division of one's time. On the other hand, the ordering of life according to a premeditated program diminishes .impressionability and prepares the unconscious mind for balanced thought

For this purpose, it is sufficient to let one's imagination delve for some moments upon the foreseeable tasks of the next day. This can be done just before going to bed or at some other appropriate time. This action leads to the formation of an invaluable habit, .which is orderliness

Those who lack this order but do not imagine that they would achieve it the very first day in a miraculous manner, when they make some kind of plans to achieve it, observe from the beginning that their habitual disorderliness vanishes

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.Al-Saduq, Ma'ani al-akhbar, p. ۳۴۲ -۱

in certain respects in the course of the very first sessions. As progress follows, it .alternately follows a rising and falling curve

However, this should not be a cause for surprise, for the leading thoughts, after alternate variations, lead to realisation of the purpose and create a background of order, which leads to an increase in the level of daily activity. This increase, together with greater means of action, broaden one's possibilities with greater fruitfulness, (continuous acquisition of knowledge and more profitable opportunities.(۱

The struggle against one's destructive urges and the carnal self is without doubt a very difficult task. Victory over such inner inclinations has been considered in the Islamic school of thought as the most salient sign of an individual's superiority and capability. It is a matter of great pride for man to be able to begin the program of his self-development by subjugating his inner urges in order to raise his personality to .the highest levels of sublimity

:Imam al-Sadiq, may peace be upon him, said

Before death approaches you and brings about a separation between your soul and body, restrain your soul from such desires as are harmful for it. Strive to liberate your soul in the same way as you toil for your livelihood, for without doubt your soul is (entirely depended for its welfare on your conduct and character.(۲

:Dr. Alexis Carrel says

Spontaneous mental growth is always inadequate. Man does not attain complete mental growth without the intervention of the will. Everyone knows that the development of muscles

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۱- Jagot, Paul Clement, Theories et procedes de l'hypnotisme course d 'entainement experimental, Pers. trans. Talqin bi nafs by Mahmud Nawa'i (Tehran, ۱۳۶۲), p. ۹۶.

۲- Al-Nuri, Mustadrak, vol. ۲, p. ۳۱۰.

and bodily members depends on conscious effort and one cannot become a champion .without regular exercises

Similarly, one must make efforts to develop his mental faculties. If the pupil has no will to learn, the most capable of teachers cannot teach him anything. The study of a set .of morals does not make anyone righteous, nor does our spirit yield to compulsion

Like one's character, the formation of personality, as Bergson says, depends upon one's own efforts. To this end, one must draw upon all one's physical and spiritual capacities and order one's inner life in an ideal manner, developing a powerful spirit .within himself

This marvel occurs every day in the course of human history, and it is mostly from humble families that great men arise, but everyone, learned or illiterate, poor or rich, young or old, can, if he will, draw upon the spiritual energy that lies in the depths of his (being.(۱

:Ali, may peace be upon him, said'

The worst kind of poverty and inadequacy is the deficiency of one's psyche and (personality.(۲

That is because spiritual inadequacies lead man more often to wretchedness and misery than material shortcomings. When the soul becomes sick and darkness is cast upon it, a wrong mode of thinking and an unhealthy state of feelings and emotions lead the person into wrong conduct and behaviour. When that happens, he loses his sense of reality as well as his inner spiritual vision and abuses his inner creative .powers as well as the available material means

The development of

Carrel, Alexis, Reflexions sur la conduite de la vie. Pers. trans., Rah wa rasm-e - ۱ .zindagi, pp. ۶۱

.Al-Amidi, Ghurar, p. ۴۴۶ -۲

personality is subject to the criteria of values in life. The development of personal qualities and merits is also based on values. Should man pursue purity and moral excellence in a resolute and steadfast manner, his mind is prepared to accept the qualities of spiritual purity, and should he be after impurities and moral defilement, he will advance towards the precipice of destruction. It is inconceivable that someone who is in pursuit of vice should turn out to be clean and pure in the end.

If man does not confine his freedom within certain reasonable limits and keep the arena of his rebellious urges confined within certain bounds, he will yield to their slavery and they will carry him off in every direction. Obviously, that means self-abasement and debasing one's human dignity. This indignity and humiliation keeps him from attaining the perfection worthy of him, and his spirit and thought will never be able to make their ascent towards wider and more expansive horizons. He will, then, lose even the inclination to rise over the plane of corporeal matters although he may have the sufficient power to make such an ascent.

The only way to bring about a balance and equilibrium between the ascent of the soul and the pressure and heaviness that pulls the soul down towards decadence and fall is establishment of a steady and enduring bond between God and man, for the greater the degree of one's separation from God, the stronger is the inclination towards deviance in his

.being

Islam sows the seeds of god-fearing and piety in the heart of every person. At the same time it does not permit within its realm any separation between faith and conduct so that he may always keep God in view, in his thought, perception and conduct-a God aware of all the secrets of his heart. Moreover, it stirs up the love of .God within his being and the desire to seek His good pleasure

As long as human virtues lack a firm and stable basis, they can have no firm foothold. Faith is the natural companion of virtue, into which it breaths life and gives it sincerity and steadiness. In this way everyone is made to feel that purity and rectitude are things that must be established within his inner self, not some abstract ideals relating to human merit and a positive personality that exists only in the imagination while one's conduct continues in some other course without realising any spiritual benefits .in actual life

In order to keep the waves of desires in check, Islam always makes use of the power of self-restraint. This orderly, aware and purposive restraint involves the soul's accounting of itself on the basis of acknowledged principles based on wisdom and design. By this means it brings about a state of harmony among the divergent urges of the individual, as an independent personality as well as a member of society, and imposes such limits upon them as to stabilise the individual's position vis-à-vis society and the society's

in relation to the individual, whereas man himself has always given precedence to one of these over the other, sacrificing the individual for social ends or neglecting society .for the sake of individual benefit

When such a harmony comes to exist in the human being, both the individual and society are set in order and all people become balanced in their thoughts and conduct .and everyone will carry out his duties in accordance with his God-given nature

But when the vision is obstructed and thought stagnates, man is kept from perceiving realities. Then he can no longer realise the defects of his personality and his inadequacies, to the extent that if he were to come to know them he would be struck .with amazement or even recoil in disdain

:Ali, may peace be upon him, said'

If one were to realise the defects and shortcomings of his personality, he would (regard them with disdain and aversion.(۱

:Schopenhauer says

In the same way as man does not feel the weight of his own body, he does not notice his own ugly habits, unseemly acts, and unworthy conduct. On the contrary he is always attentive to the defects and shortcomings of others. Others, like a mirror, reflect our defects and shortcomings, but we don't notice them and imagine that the (image we observe in the mirror belongs to someone else.(۲

Hence one must awaken one's soul from its slumber so that it may open its eyes and see facts. This awakening makes a most wonderful impact on the being

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.Ibid. p. ۶۰۴ -۱

.Schopenhauer, op. cit., p. ۹۳ -۲

of man and in this state he feels as if he has found a new life and his being has undergone a renewal. That is because the opening of the soul's eyes affects one's entire life with all its great expanse and sets a decadent personality back on the .course of development

Ali, may peace be upon him, describes the significant role of thought and' :contemplation in these words

Accustom yourself to thought and contemplation, because that will deliver you from (misguidance and reform your character and conduct.(۱

(The contemplation of good actions leads man to perform good acts.(۲

The people's immersion in thought concerning something is the preparatory stage for (that thing's coming into existence.(۳

:Dr. Marden, writing about thought and its beneficial results, says

In this world thought is the regulator of everything. This fact did not come to light for a long time and was hidden from common view. When people realised the significance .of thought, they regarded it with veneration and acclaim

However, they imagined it to be a fixed and unchanging power exclusively possessed by exceptional and rare minds. It was only in recent years that the art of thinking has been subjected to study and research and attracted the attention of the populace. These studies have shown that we can modify our moral characteristics with the help of thought, alter the external factors of our life-or at least the influence of these factors on ourselves-and, as a result, attain happiness and success. In any case, the educative possibilities of thought are

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.Al-Amidi, Ghurar, p. ۴۸۱ -۱

Ibid. p. ۳۹۶ -۲

.Ibid. p. ۵۱ -۳

.unlimited and its results are inexhaustible

Every thought is a stroke of the chisel that carves out the marble of life. Hence we must decide to focus our thinking on nobler ends, utilise it for worthy goals, and .muster all our will power to implement this resolution

With all your conscious faculties you must be convinced that thought has absolute sovereignty over your fortunes, and that every thought has its own share in shaping your destiny. You must believe that if you direct your thoughts in a worthy direction, .good fortune will come to you in a very natural and easy manner

The role played by thought in the material and spiritual flow of life is gradually becoming ever more evident, and those who disagree with one another on various issues are unanimous on this matter. The results of practical experience have convinced the most skeptical of persons of the truth of this matter and technical experiments have further reinforced the views of thinkers in this regard.(۱)

The Harms of Evil Thoughts

In the same way as positive and sublime thoughts lead man to perform fruitful actions, so also filthy thoughts drive man towards impurity and defilement. For man is .a thinking creature; he first thinks and then translates his thoughts into action

When improper thoughts make way into the depths of man's being and spread like weeds, positive and good thoughts, which are like beautiful plants, are gradually eliminated and their place is taken by evil thoughts. As a result of these satanic thoughts one is prepared to

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۱- Marden, Orison Swett, The Victorious Attitude, Pers. trans. Piruzi-ye fikr, pp. ۷, ۸, ۱۰.

.commit ugly acts that blacken the heart and destroy one's life

Every tree develops and grows gradually and yields its sweet or bitter fruits. An evil thought, too, is like a seed that will not yield any fruit except and evil deed. Man involuntarily entertains and pursues evil thoughts and with the passage of time they .gradually run their roots in all corners of his soul and grow into a big and strong tree

The attainment of happiness and felicity, however, requires a soul at peace and a heart that is pure. If the soul's window is closed on ugly thoughts, room is created in it .for the growth of good thoughts

Some great man was asked, "Where can happiness be found?" He replied, "In the beauty of human thought." Hence one must block the stream at its source and stop improper thoughts from entering one's mind. Further, one must accustom oneself to .thinking about fruitful and worthy matters

:Ali, may peace be upon him, said'

Nurture in yourselves a love of contemplation and accustom yourselves to seeking forgiveness, for that cleanses you of sins and impurities and increases your reward.(۱)

Habituate yourself to purity of intention and sincerity of purpose, so that you may succeed in your efforts and endeavours.(۲)

Although the personal qualities that have already been moulded are not so simple to alter, but if one makes a persisting effort to eradicate undesirable characteristics that lead the personality into decadence and destruction, given the significant capacity of ,the human being to acquire desirable habits

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۱- Al-Amidi, Ghurar, p. ۱۹۲.

۲- Ibid. p. ۴۹۲.

.human merits and virtues gradually take roots in the mind in a natural manner

In order to attain to noble qualities one must concentrate his attention on commendable traits, for through self-suggestion of such virtues and meritorious .qualities and their development one can obtain brilliant results

:Paul Clement Jagot writes

Self-suggestion arranges another array of troops in the battle against habit, instead of itself launching an attack, it introduces certain ideas into the unconscious which are opposed to those originated by a particular habit. In this way, it produces a gradual .mental sublimation in the vital faculties

The first point to be kept in view for achieving this goal is to pay close attention to the .fact that every habit can be abandoned

I can liberate myself totally from its evil, and I shall achieve my goal"; this one should" constantly go on repeating to oneself. In accordance with the law of self-suggestion this conviction gradually takes on an absolute aspect as a result of repetition. The unconscious records the above suggestion, and removes the unpleasant feeling of unavoidable compulsion and futility of resistance that is produced as a result of .enslavement to habit and whose futility can be proved through sound experience

If I analyse the apparent satisfaction produced in me when yielding to an (undesirable) habit, I will be convinced that this mental satisfaction is insignificant and it would be better instead to enjoy avoiding the harms that always accompany this (kind of erroneous conduct.(١

The Relation between Goals and the Development of Personality

That which leads man towards his sublime station and a

.Jagot, Paul Clement, op. cit., p. ١٠٢ -١

well-developed personality is the possession of worthy goals in life. The higher these .goals are, the more developed his personality will be

Without doubt, Islam offers goals that are vast and a horizon that is wide and all-inclusive. The Muslims who grew up under the sublime teachings of the Noble Prophet of Islam, may God bless him and his Household, were able to establish a profound relationship with the Source of existence and to purify their souls. Through this means they attained to sublime and distinguished personalities. Basically, it were these .worthy and invaluable goals that constantly drove them onwards

:Allport, a well-known American psychologist, writes

Intentions, as I use the term, are complex peculiar characteristics of personality. Intentional characteristics represent above all else the individual's primary modes of addressing himself to the future. As such they select stimuli, guide inhibitions and ...choices, and have much to do with the process of adult becoming

Personality is not what one has, but rather the projected outcome of his growth. Similarly, Spranger views the character of an individual in terms of his approximation to an ideal type (an ultimately self-consistent value system). It is the orientation that is important. From this point of view we may modify slightly our contention that complex levels of structure influence becoming. More precisely stated, it is the unfinished structure that has this dynamic power. A finished structure is static, but a growing structure, tending toward a given direction of closure, has the capacity to subsidiate and guide conduct in conformity

with its movement.... To summarise: the most comprehensive units in personality are broad intentional dispositions future pointed. These characteristics are unique for each person, and tend to attract, guide, inhibit the more elementary units to accord ...with the major intentions themselves

To feel oneself meaningfully linked to the whole of Being is not possible before puberty. This fact helps to explain the one-sided emphasis we encounter in many psychological discussions of religion. Becoming has been much more thoroughly studied for the years preceding puberty than for adolescent and adult years. It is, therefore, understandable that the factor influencing the religion of childhood should loom large in our present view: familiarity, dependence, authority, wishful thinking .and magical practice

Since, however, the process of becoming continues throughout life, we rightly expect to find the fully developed sentiment only in the adult reaches of personality. The adult mind, provided that it is still growing, stretches its rational capacities as far as it can with the logic of induction, deduction, and a weighing of probabilities. While the intellect continues to exert itself, the individual finds that he needs to build aspiring .defences against the intellect's almost certain failure

He learns that to surmount the difficulties of a truculent world he needs also faith and love. Thus religion, engaging as it does reason, faith, and love, becomes for him morally true. Most religious people claim that it is also metaphysically true because they feel that outer revelation and mystical experience have brought them supernatural assurance. Thus the

warrant for certitude comes from the total orientation that the person attains in his quest for a comprehensive belief system capable of relating him to existence as a ....whole

Every man whether he is religiously inclined or not, has his own ultimate presuppositions. He finds he cannot live his life without them, and for him they are true. Such suppositions, whether they be called ideologies, philosophies, notions, or merely hunches about life, exert creative pressure upon all conduct that is subsidiary .(to them (which is to say, upon nearly all of a man's conduct

The error of the psychoanalytic theory of religion-to state the error in its own terminology-lies in locating religious belief exclusively in the defensive functions of the ego rather than in the core and centre and substance of the developing ego itself. While religion certainly fortifies the individual against the inroads of anxiety, doubt, and despair, it also provides the forward intention that enables him at each state of (his becoming to relate himself meaningfully to the totality of Being.(۱)

The Interrelatedness of Psychological and Physiological Activities

Scientific research and experiments have proved that psychological diseases affect the body, which also suffers from the sickness. On the contrary, the psyche is also affected by the body's chemical reactions. This indicates a reciprocal relation between .psychic life and the life of the body

Although this scientific theory is ascribed to the last few decades, both the points it contains have been explicitly mentioned in Islamic traditions and have a history of .fourteen centuries

The Commander of the Faithful, may

p: ۱۱۴

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۱ - Allport, Gordon Willard, Becoming: Basic Considerations for a Psychology of .Personality (New Haven London: Yale University Press ۱۹۵۵), pp. ۸۹-۹۰, ۹۴-۹۶

:peace be upon him, says about the effects of psychological ailments on the body

It is surprising to what extent envious persons are negligent of the health of their bodies.(۱)

Grief and sadness have a wasting effect on the body.(۲)

Whoever submits to his anger and does not control it, advances towards premature death and destruction.(۳)

The Noble Messenger, may peace and God's benedictions be upon him and his Progeny, states the relation between the body's physiological processes and one's :spiritual and moral character and disposition in these words

Do not deaden your hearts by the means of excessive eating and drinking, for man's spiritual condition is like a farm, which is destroyed when flooded with excessive water.(۴)

One who gets accustomed to excessive eating and drinking becomes hard-hearted and lacking in compassion.(۵)

:The Commander of the Faithful, may peace be upon him, also says

The heaviness of food in the stomach has an evil effect on a man's intelligence.(۶)

:The well-known scholar, Dr. Carrel, says

Mental activities evidently depend on physiological activities. Organic modifications are observed to correspond to the succession of the states of consciousness. Inversely, psychological phenomena are determined by certain functional states of the organs. The whole consisting of body and consciousness is modifiable by organic as well as by mental factors. Mind and organism commune in man, like form and .marble in a statue. One cannot change the form without breaking the marble

Everyone knows how human personality is modified by diseases of the liver, the ... stomach, and the intestines. Obviously, the cells of the

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۱- Nahj al-balaghah, ed. Dr. Subhi al-Salih, p. ۵۰۸.

۲- Al-Amidi, Ghurar, p. ۶۵۴.

۳- Ibid. p. ۳۵.

۴- Nahj as-fasahah p. ۵۲۱.

۵- Ibid. p. ۵۷۳.

۶- Al-Amidi, Ghurar, p. ۲۴.

organs discharge into the bodily fluids certain substances that react upon our mental .and spiritual functions

The dependence of mental activities and physiological functions does not agree ... with the classical conception that places the soul exclusively in the brain. In fact, the entire body appears to be the substratum of mental and spiritual energies. Thought is .the offspring of the endocrine glands as well as of the cerebral cortex

The integrity of the organism is indispensable to the manifestation of consciousness. Man thinks, invents, loves, suffers, admires, and prays with his brain and all his (organs.(۱

:Gardner Murphy, a contemporary psychologist, writes

It is only the last few decades that it has become quite clear to what extent it is possible for emotions and attitudes, or, in other words, loves and antipathies, to be a .reflection of the chemical reactions one's body

Psycho-physiology clearly shows the bilateral and reciprocal relation between mental and physical life; that is, the functional relationship between the body's chemical reactions and mental states on the one hand, and between mental stimuli and physiological states on the other. Today we can no longer speak of the body and its vital chemical system as the fundamental factor governing psychological life. Rather, .we should consider psychological factors as regulating the body's chemical system

Or perhaps it would be better to say, as pointed out by specialists who have closely examined the problem, that throughout we are confronted with a psycho-physiological unit, in which sometimes the psychological aspect and sometimes the psychological and chemical

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۱- Carrel, Alexis, Man the Unknown (Bombay: Wilco Publishing House), pp. ۱۳۸, ۱۳۹, ۱۴۰.

.aspect should receive the primary attention

The dictum 'know thyself' today does not mean as it did in ancient times the unilateral dominance of a non-material principle over a matter devoid of life and consciousness, nor does it consist in a belief similar to that of the nineteenth-century materialists, who would say that the brain secretes thought in the same manner as the liver secretes bile. Today we look forward to an increasing recognition and acceptance of mutual co-operation between the psychological and chemical approaches to the (study of man.(۱

Chapter ۴: Man in the Midst of Duties

point

Living together with other members of his species is one of man's natural needs. His innate tendency for collective life is an independent factor that causes him to .establish communities

Human society, too, revolves around the variety and disparity amongst individuals and classes, and in it every individual shoulders particular responsibilities and duties which he must carry out properly. The system of society runs properly when everyone has faith in the responsibilities accepted by him in his work environment and his .activities do not trespass the limits of those duties

The animals do not have to abide by any limits or controls in their life. But man, on the contrary, is surrounded by various kinds of regulations and restrictions, to the extent that they may be said to encompass all the aspects of his life. It is these limits and .regulations that distinguish man's life from that of animals

Every movement and pause creates a certain duty for man and this system of

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.Murphy, Gardner, Human Potentialities (?), Raz-e karishmahha pp. ۲۹۵, ۲۹۷, ۲۹۸ -۱

duties regulates human life. In a word, duty is something that extends from the earliest to the latest stages of life and at no point is it possible to draw a line of separation between a person and his multifarious duties. As long as there is any capacity, it is accompanied by duty, and it is only death, when it catches hold of a person, that can close the file of his duties.

Apart from the precepts and laws of religion, man as a matter of principle is by his nature also bound by laws. His relation to values and norms, his characteristic instincts and emotions-all these give rise to duties. Although there may be scattered motives behind the performance of duty, it may be said that the universal laws of reason constitute the axis for the determination of duty. Adherence to the precepts of religion also depends on compliance with rationally inferred laws, because, in social matters and issues of life, the rules and precepts of religion are an elaboration of general rational truths.

That which is difficult is not the identification of duty but rather its observance in practice, which is harder than is ordinarily imagined. In this path, only by the means of a firm and steadfast faith, self-denial and vigilance can one attain the goal.

In the same way as social environment provides the ground for the development and growth of human merits, it also provides an atmosphere conductive to the emergence of many vices. The development and growth

of society stagnates and comes to a halt when every individual transgresses the .bounds of his duties and neglects his major responsibilities

Every plant needs particular conditions in order to have a sustained growth and grow to its fully developed stage. However, that which is essential for the growth and development of society is not its geographic location or material conditions; what it requires are particular educational and spiritual conditions that may serve as .foundations of a worthy and progressive society

In a society where the spirit of duty-consciousness rules over the minds of people, purity and righteousness become visible in their intentions and conduct, and in their cognition, thought and practice in all walks of life. Obviously, in such societies aggression, betrayal and violation of others' rights do not flourish nor are given an opportunity to do so. Rather, every individual there opposes and resists vice and .crime and prevents them from spreading

We are not led into trouble except as a result of neglecting our various duties and failing to carry them out. Many people are parsimonious in regard to themselves and their energies despite all the various kinds of means they have at their disposal. For this reason they shun their responsibilities and avoid the tasks which in their view would deprive them partly of their joys and comfort. They are not inclined to devote a .part of their time to matters that will be of benefit to others

This group of people, whose horizon of thought and whose scope of

activities is always narrow and limited and revolves around personal and petty matters, become accustomed to these spiritual qualities. That is why they can never undertake great and worthy tasks or exhibit any ability or personal accomplishment in any matter of consequence.

As against these is the other group of persons who never take lightly their responsibilities under any condition. They are never shaken or upset by the vicissitudes, reversals and ups and downs of life. They are always prepared to welcome responsibility and generously offer their efforts for the benefit of humanity.

They think that the accomplishment of every beneficial and useful task, however demanding on one's effort and time it may be, is the most beneficial thing to do. Accordingly, the wiser a person and the more profound his insight, the greater is his interest and inclination for the fulfilment of duty.

Struggle for Realisation of Higher Ideals

That which gives worth to life is struggle for the sake of realisation of sublime and fruitful ideals. One must resolve to reach a station worthy of humanity and make every possible effort to develop himself, fulfil his duty, and offer ungrudging service to society. In the sweet words of Hafiz:

Though the world's wont, like the bud, is to be close-fisted, yet you, like the spring breeze, be an opener of knots.

Dr. Schweitzer writes:

Often we hear people say, "I want to do some good in this world but the obligations of life and work are so exacting that I cannot score any success in this regard. I am

sunk to my ears in the petty chores of life and there doesn't arise any opportunity for my life to become meaningful." This is a very common-and dangerous-mistake. Everyone finds opportunities at his doorstep to help others, so that his spirit may rise to the occasion and attain peace and joy. In order to attain this joy it is not at all .necessary to neglect one's ordinary duties or to perform some dazzling feat

I call this spiritual work your 'second duty'. All that you must do is to make use of the many opportunities that arise and carry out this duty. You will get plenty of excellent opportunities in this path and acquire a perfect ability to make use of them. At this .point all the energies stored up in your being will swing into action

That which the world needs today, and lacks, are people devoted to fulfilling others' needs. In this work, done for the sake of others, both the helper and the helped are .blessed

We are gradually losing our personality under the strains of modern society. The ... urge for creativity and self-assertion is killed in us. Accordingly, the attainment of genuine civilisation is delayed. The big mistake of every one of us is that we travel blindfolded through life and do not notice the good opportunities that arise. Once we open our eyes and look around we will observe many people who need our help, riot .for big things but for very small things

In altruism and sacrifice

p: ۱۲۱

we must invest the best part of ourselves. The coin that a widow gives, which is all that she owns, has greater worth than all the donations of the rich. We often hear people say, "Were I rich I would do many things for people". But one can be rich in respect of love and charity. If we discover the real needs of those who require help and take steps to meet them, we would have spent the best part of ourselves in this path, which is love and compassion for others and which all the money in the world .cannot equal

You might think that my life in the equatorial forests of Africa is something wonderful. But you should know that you can live a more wonderful life by remaining where you are and, by impelling your soul to effort, engage in a thousand kinds of good and kindly actions. This task demands a spirit of sacrifice and courage and a strength of will, and the determination to love, which is the greatest test of a human being. But you must know that it is in this second and difficult duty that you can find true (happiness.(۱

Man is free either to obey or disobey the commands of his conscience. Every man is the master of his soul and his will. He may choose rectitude and purity, liberate himself from the bondage of lust and endless desires, make chivalrousness his motto, and abstain from injustice and cruelty. These qualities and virtues

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۱- Kelidha-ye khushbakati, trans. from English into Persian by Ahmad Aram, Tehran: .Shirkat-e Sahami-ye Intishar, Khurdad ۱۳۴۷, pp. ۲۶۹-۲۷۷

are within his reach and he may adorn himself with them through persistent effort. He may also take an opposite path, the path of decadence and vice, and dive into the .ocean of variegated lusts and pleasures

The power of will is a heavenly gift which must never be left idle or used for filthy purposes and inhuman goals instead of being employed in the path of duty. The lack of will and determination is the biggest obstacle in the way of fulfilment of duties. The employment of will power under the guidance of conscience and in the struggle against carnal urges and desires, against egoism and moral vices, is a difficult task at the beginning and requires self-denying effort. But through determination, persistence and perseverance, the soul gradually becomes stronger and its moral characteristics improve. Then, the performance of duty becomes a quite normal and .easy matter

If one's feeling of duty-consciousness be strong, he would not retreat in the face of hardship and obstacles. Even when such a person's effort remains fruitless due to obstacles, his conscience at least would be at peace and he would be able to hold his head high before himself because his defeat and failure have been for the sake of .duty

:A father gives the following counsel to his son

My son let it be that you remain poor and penniless while others gather wealth and get rich in front of your eyes through deceit and treachery. Lead your life without position and glory and let

others get into high positions through obsequiousness and servility. Put up with misery and loss and let others satisfy their desires by the means of flattery and .sycophancy

Refrain from associating with big people, to get near whom others are killing themselves. It is better for you to put on the garment of virtue and piety so that when your head turns white there isn't any blot on your honour and good name. At that (time, thank God and surrender to death with an easy mind and a happy heart.(۱

In the same way as admonishment, reproof and censure are beneficial in the struggle against vices, so also appreciation, commendation and encouragement are undeniably effective in producing better motivation for work and performance of duty. Evil is the state of a nation in which traitors are encouraged and worthy and duty-conscious servants are censured, humiliated and driven away from sensitive positions in society. Where deceit and imposture bring success and those who are totally devoid of human values attain their cherished goals, a nation in which those who wish to fulfil their human mission remain deprived as long as they continue to live in purity-in such a society there remain utterly no grounds for the growth of moral .excellence

Obviously, in such an environment the attraction and inclination for deceit, corruption and hypocrisy make way, on an extensive level, into the depths of the people's souls, and vice and corruption rapidly take the place of virtues and decent morals. In such an ,environment

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.Samuel Smith, Akhlaq-e Samuel, Persian trans. p. ۸ -۱

many chaste souls may be compelled to turn their backs on piety and purity as a result of unbearable pressures, for there are few people who can heroically safeguard their souls in such a corrupt environment and preserve their piety and purity in the mire of social filth. Yet all people do not have such extraordinary qualities so as to continue with their sublime and majestic spirit to live amongst a base and .decadent people

In the course of his upbringing an ordinary individual stands in dire need of a society on which he can rely to offer him worthy examples that may acquaint him with .practical patterns of conduct in life

Faith and Duty–Consciousness

The sense of duty and consciousness of responsibilities, which envelop all aspects of human life, are the most fundamental factors of individual and social welfare. Islamic .education is also based on developing the sense of duty and its fulfilment

In his pursuit of welfare and happiness every Muslim must rely solely on his faith and actions in life and refrain from putting his reliance in anything else. Imam al-Sajjad, may peace be upon him, in one of his precious sayings describes the encompassing :character of man's duties in various spheres

You-may God include you in His infinite mercy and blessings-should know that the Sustainer of the world has assigned certain duties and rights to you whose number is so great that they cover your entire conduct and behaviour, your every act and movement, every pause and stop that you may make and

every halt that you may decide upon, and, ultimately, every bodily member that obeys your will. These rights are evident and clear, although some of these involve greater responsibility than others.(۱)

In Islam everyone is responsible for his actions and no one is answerable for another's duties and responsibilities. The Qur'an declares:

Whosoever is guided, is only guided to his own gain, and whosoever goes astray, it is only to his own loss; no soul laden bears the load of another. (۱۷:۱۵)

There is a power present in the depths of man's being that calls upon him to perform his duties and carry out his responsibilities. That inner power reassures him when he responds to its call and carries out his duty, and after its performance infuses his soul with tranquillity and delight. This invisible power is the same conscience that arises from the depths of innate nature and impels us to perform good acts and to shun vice.

It may be imagined that the conscience is solely capable of insuring the fulfilment of various duties without our needing to follow the teachings of religion. However, in fact, the moral faculty of the conscience, notwithstanding its worth in providing the needs of man's well-being, is not singly capable of saving man from decadence and fall in all situations and under all conditions.

Before everything, we must pay attention to the range and scope of the activity of the conscience. The dictates of the conscience concerning a matter vary in relation to the different national and

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۱- Al-Harrani, Tuhaf al-uqul, p. ۲۵۵.

ethnic customs and factors of space and time. The persuasive activity of the conscience relates to matters that have been approved as right and praiseworthy previously by social custom and habit, although it may in fact be something abominable or blameworthy from the viewpoint of the customs of another people. In certain eras of human history some of the most shameful and filthiest of acts have been considered by people as being virtuous and praiseworthy and have borne the .seal of general approval

:The Holy Qur'an refers to this fact in these words

O Prophet, say to the people, "Shall we tell you who will be the greatest losers in their works? Those whose striving goes astray in the present life, while they think that they (were working good deeds." (۱۸:۱۰۳-۱۰۴

But their hearts were hardened, and Satan had decked out fair to them what they (were doing. (۶:۴۳

Moreover, conscience is not capable of resisting unaided the onslaughts of many carnal desires and withstanding the fierce hurricane of lust for wealth and position. In the battlefield against urges and instincts its resistance is diminished in degrees, and it is possible that it may be overwhelmed in the very first encounter with them. The tricks of the carnal self, by turning facts upside down, may deceive the conscience .and extinguish the light of this lamp that illuminates man's inner being

The conscience needs a firm foothold and guide as represented by faith, which stands above the domain of common custom and is not subject to

its mandates. Those in whose inner being the innate spirit of tawhid (monotheism) has been awakened and who have real faith in God, they pay full attention to the voice of conscience, considering its mandates to be God's natural guidance. For them not only duty is not a heavy burden to carry about but gives them strength and joy. They carry .out their duties with burning love, dedication, and zeal

Where there is no conflict between conscience and instinctive urges, it is easy to obey the mandates of conscience. But difficulty arises when obeying conscience entails suppression of one of one's inner desires. The power of instinct, which has a wide field open in front of it for its assaults, overwhelms conscience if it is not reinforced by .religious faith, and the field of action will be practically taken over by instinct

It is fact that every human call that is not derived from faith in God is devoid of meaning in the objective world and amounts to no more than a pretty and exciting fancy. The call of Islam, which was realised in the objective world and became practical on earth, opened a brilliant chapter for itself in history. It is a call based on calling the souls of people to the Source of legislation, to the sublime horizon of human felicity, on guiding and linking the hearts to the infinite Divine essence. Otherwise man will not always accept the mandates of insipid and dry human calls and will not submit

to their logic in all situations and under all conditions. When moral teachings come into conflict with the carnal desires of people, they violate those teachings in order to attain to their wishes and demands.

Le Comte du Nouy says:

Some atheists who are morally inclined by temperament say that the basic problem is obedience to ethical laws. Hence if we can act in accordance with these laws in practice, we would not stand in need of religion. This approach indicates ignorance of human psychology, for man is skeptical of the worth of laws whose source is uncertain to him.

Moreover, such an approach discloses a misunderstanding of the basic problem, for the objective is that man should grow inwardly so that he thinks in an ethical manner. The goal is not to induce him to behave in an ethical way. For so long as one's conduct is not indicative of a deep inner development, his behaviour will remain a series of artificial, conventional and temporary restraints which will vanish at the first excuse. If moral rules are imposed in an arbitrary manner, no matter how much practical value that may have, they will never be successful in fighting animalistic urges.(۱)

William James, the famous Western philosopher and psychologist, writes:

The sheer moralist obeys the universal laws that govern the universe on the basis of his knowledge, but this obedience is accompanied with a certain sense of burden and regret. He does not feel any warmth and passion in his heart. The feeling

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۱- Pierre Le Comte du Nouy, Sarnevisht-e bashar, p. ۲۱۶.

that these laws are like a yoke never leaves him. In religion, on the contrary, this cold and dismal obedience is replaced by a warm welcome and enthusiasm that fills .everything in life with grace, joy, sincerity and vigour

All our moral rules are like bandages that are applied to conceal scars and wounds, ...without containing any healing balm

It is here that religion comes to our help and takes charge of our destiny. Religion (offers a spiritual state and station that cannot be found anywhere else.(۱

Luqman's Counsel

In the verses of the Holy Qur'an we came across the sayings of Luqman addressed to his son, which are rich in meaning and loaded with profound advice. While giving educative and beneficial exhortation to his son, he sets down in outline the principal .duties of every human being

:Man's Duty to God .۱

And when Luqman said to his son, admonishing him, "O my son, do not associate (others with God; to associate others with God is a great in justice" (۳۱:۱۳

:One's Duty to Parents .۲

And We have charged man concerning his parents (to treat with kindness and gratitude, and to fulfil the rights of) his mother, who bore him in weakness upon weakness and his weaning was in two years-Be thankful to Me, and to thy parents; to (Me is the homecoming (of all My creation). (۳۱:۱۴

:Man's Duty towards Others .۳

O my son, perform the prayer, and bid people unto virtue and honour, and forbid them from vice and dishonour. And bear patiently whatever may

William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, Persian Trans,. Din wa rawan, -١

.p. ١٩

befall thee in this path of guiding and educating people at the hands of ignorant (persons, for surely that is a mark of true constancy. (۳۱:۱۷

Turn not your face from men in scorn and pride, and do not be indifferent towards them, and walk not in the earth exultantly, for God loves not any man proud and (boastful. (۳۱:۱۸

:Man's Duty to Himself .۴

In general be modest and moderate in your conduct in life, and speak in a low voice, (for the coarsest and most hideous of voices is the ass's. (۳۱:۱۹

The Levels of Duty–Consciousness and Worship

As all people do not have a single level of intellectual capacity and there is a significant difference between them from the point of view of understanding and perspicacity, the leaders of the Islamic faith have called the people to fulfil their duties in different .ways in conformity with the different levels of thinking

Their approach in their religious call is such that learned and contemplative individuals as well as the common and illiterate people can benefit from their guidance. For instance, to some people for whom the only matter of interest is profit and loss, it has called them to a profitable deal. To others who are mostly interested in pleasures and joys, it has promised them paradise, overflowing with plenteous pleasures and .everlasting bounties, and warned another group of the painful punishment of hell

Obviously most people are incapable of perceiving more refined meanings or of aspiring to higher goals. The establishment of duties in society and the general

propagation of moral virtues for large numbers of individuals has not been possible except through this means. That is because human nature, by the side of its potentialities, is tainted by various kinds of frailties and vulgarities, and practically few individuals are capable of taking into view the intrinsic worth of an action or attending to a higher goal. In most individuals who have attained to the higher degrees of morality and human excellence, the idea of reward and punishment has had much .effectiveness in the initial stages

In general, an important part of the rapid progress of heavenly religions and their penetration into the hearts of the people has been due to the fact that, contrary to many man-made laws and ordinances, they attach a special importance to abstention from sins. In the system of education of these faiths, abstention from sin is not only the cause of deliverance from punishment but also that of reception of fair material and spiritual rewards. As regards his psychic makeup, man exhibits a keener responsiveness and sensitiveness to reward and is consequently more attracted to a .teaching that offers reward in return for the fulfilment of duty

Some of the traditions that refer to people who offer unconditional obedience to Divine commands and without the hope of reward or the fear of punishment, relate to a particular group of individuals whose knowledge of God's infinite essence is of a very high degree. Those righteous souls attain to the highest degrees of sincerity and perform

.their duties for the sake of God's good pleasure, not for any reward

This group of persons have been called 'free man' in the traditions, whereas those who do worship and perform duties for the sake of reward have been called 'hired .'workers', and those who do their duty for fear of punishment, 'slaves

:Ali, may peace be upon him, said'

A group of people worship God for the sake of reward. That is the worship of merchants. A group of people worship God from the fear or punishment. That is the worship of slaves. But a group of God's servants worship Him solely out of gratitude and thankfulness. And this kind of worship is special to free men.[۱]

Aveberry, the well-known British scholar, says something similar in this context. He :writes

Someone whose soul is full to the brim with the love of God is compelled to worship and glorify Him. He worships God neither with the hope of reward nor for the fear of punishment, but solely for the sake of God. One who performs a virtuous deed or abstains from a sinful act for the sake of reward or for the fear of punishment, cannot be proud of his conduct. Such a one cannot be considered a godly person. He is a .businessman who works for his own profit and is a mercenary who toils for a wage

Nevertheless, such conduct is also commendable in itself when we take into view those who destroy themselves through ignorance, blacken their souls with the smoke

p: ۱۳۳

۱- Nahj al-balaghah, trans. by Fayd al-Islam, p. ۱۱۸۲.

of sin, and never worship God. Thus we can reckon the mercenary persons who are solely concerned with reward and punishment among the good.

But there is no doubt that that which causes them to act virtuously is something extremely petty and insignificant, for it would be much better if they pass beyond this stage and worship God because He is worthy of being worshipped.

Those who wear out their spirits in the path of beauty and art, do not expect any profit. They have a higher end in view, which is not tinged with materialistic ends. They admire beauty and love art, and endeavour to capture the fair bird of beauty in the cage of their imagination and to show it to others.

How good it would be if, in the path of religion, we too be like the lovers of art and liberate our souls from all traces of mundane ends and cherish no goal except the glorification of Eternal Beauty. This is the true religion that can elevate our souls to the peaks of perfection.(۱)

The greater the faith of an individual in God, the more visibly are his acts marked with sincerity, so that the effort to attain God's good pleasure predominates all his desires and attachments. He performs every virtuous act without any fear of punishment or hope of reward.

This moral ideal and sublime spirit is of such a great worth that there is no ideal that can equal it, and there are only a few of such moral

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۱- John Lubbock Aveberry, Dar justeju-ye khushbakhti, p. ۲۲۸.

.geniuses in every era who can attain it

Ali, the Commander of the God-fearing, may peace be upon him, says this about his' own position as a servant vis-à-vis God: My Creator, I do not glorify or worship Thee in the fear of hell and the hope of paradise. Rather, I worship Thee because I consider .Thee worthy of being worshipped

,Like a beggar, don't serve your Master for a wage

(For He Himself knows how to take care of His servants.(۱

:The Noble Qur'an quotes the Prophet Solomon's prayer in this verse

My Lord, inspire me so that I may be thankful for Thy blessing wherewith Thou hast blessed me and my father and mother, and that I may do righteousness well-pleasing (to Thee. (۲۷:۱۹

It should be noted that 'worship' (ibadah) in Islam is not limited only to those moments when one is performing ritual acts of worship. Rather, it has a wide and comprehensive meaning that includes all the aspects of life, and as 'a way of life' covers the entire scope of life. 'Worship' in the ordinary sense, as well as thought, perception and the daily matters of life-all are included in worship so long as God is one's goal and end. In other words, worship is the principal basis on which rest all the norms and regulations of life; for brief moments of worship and fleeting rites by .themselves do not have a very considerable value in life

They are of significance only when one's behaviour and conduct and all the

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.Fayd al-Kashani, Haqa'iq, p. ۲۰۲ -۱

affairs of one's life are clearly and unambiguously based on this principle, and when man bears witness, not merely verbally, but in actual practice that no power and .entity is worthy of being worshipped except the sacred Essence of the Creator

Similarly, 'worship' in the teachings of Islam does not mean that one's heart should be filled with piety and God-fearing only when one is performing ritual duties; that once they are over, impiety and vices should dominate one's soul, divesting him of all goodness and making him shun justice and righteousness. One's heart does not commune with God in such a worship, and such a person is like a lost traveller who cannot advance towards his goal and destination with the help of the light that .illuminates the path in the dark of the night

:The Qur'an declares

It is not piety that you turn your faces to the East and to the West. True piety is this: to have faith in God and the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets, to give of one's substance, however cherished, to kinsmen, and orphans, the needy, the traveller, beggars, and to ransom the slave, to perform the prayer, to pay the alms. And they who fulfil their covenant when they have engaged in a covenant, and endure with fortitude misfortune, hardship and peril, they are they who are true in their faith; (these are the truly God-fearing. (۲:۱ ۷۷

,The basic principle of Islamic education is that there be a perpetual

comprehensive and unbreakable bond between man and God. His object of love and fear, hope and reliance, is God. God is the sole authority to Whom he must make recourse in every matter and observe His ordinances, laws and commands in all .moments of his life

It is such a living and thorough link between man's heart and God that gives to everything its wholeness and consummate perfection and without which everything becomes hollow and futile. The individual finds morality, virtue and all positive values .by relying on that bond

Without doubt, the human merits that spring from faith in God and His eternal and fundamental law are in fact man's genuine virtues and merits, which cannot be expected from anyone whose education and upbringing is not based on a real link .with God

Chapter ۵: The Stormy Sea of Life

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Life is like a restless sea, full of wonders and always in a state of perpetual turmoil caused by the waves of events. No one is secure from the violent waves on the surface of this deep ocean. Pleasure and pain in this world, like positive and negative forces in nature, together perform their function everywhere. Opposed to joy and delight are grief and sadness and opposed to youth and vitality are old age and .weakness

Everyone who is alive must bear the burden of affliction and suffering. Everyone who sets out on this sea is bound to be drenched by its waters and encounter in the course of his life a series of unpleasant and

painful events: failure, privation, the death of dear ones and many other afflictions of the kind. Who is it that has remained unscathed by the arrows of time and secure ?from the tempests of events

The type of hardships and calamities, it is true, is different in every age, but the universal principle of hardship and suffering is intertwined with man's life in all its stages. Certainly, the means of comfort and welfare have never been so within man's .reach in any era of history to the extent they are accessible today

Similarly, he has never attain the knowledge of nature's complex mysteries that he possesses today and been never so successful in subduing nature's unfriendly elements to the extent of today. In the shadow of science and with the power of technology, the civilised human being has overcome many of his difficulties by .employing nature's various forces to his benefit

However, despite these remarkable advancements in science and its brilliant achievements, and in spite of possessing all the different means essential for a better life, man today not only does not possess the feeling of mental peace and security that are basic for a happy life, he is drifting further away from the goal of a pleasant and wholesome life. From the viewpoint of peace and happiness, the future prospects .of this materialistic life of today are not promising

It cannot be denied that in most advanced societies psychological stress and anxiety ,have constantly increased in direct proportion to scientific, industrial

and economic progress and with the expansion of civic amenities and affluence. With the increase in psychic problems, the corresponding increase in the number of .psychotherapists and psychiatrists has not at all helped to meet the situation

:Dr. Schneider writes

What is it that has a greater share of human misery than anything else? I can answer this question in my capacity as a physician. It is a chronic disease. It will frighten you somewhat if you think about it. For out of a thousand kinds of diseases to which the human constitution is prone, one of them is as prevalent as the remaining nine hundred and ninety-nine of them. In the United States of America, fifty percent of those who go to see a physician suffer from this illness. Some claim that the figure is .even higher than fifty percent

At the Oxis Clinic in New Orleans a report was prepared about five hundred patients who had consecutively made a call to that place. It revealed that seventy-five percent of them suffered from this illness. A person could be affected by it irrespective of his age and the stage of his life. Moreover, the diagnosis and treatment of this disease .are terribly expensive

I will hasten to refrain from mentioning its name, for that may lead you to a misunderstanding. Its first characteristic is that it is not a real disease. Traditionally it was referred to as 'mental illness' and now they call it psychosomatic disorder. It is not an illness in

the sense that the sick person should really consider himself to be ill. But the suffering that one undergoes as a result of it is as severe as the spasms of pain due to bilious .colic

Psychosomatic illness is not something produced by bacteria, virus, or an unnatural growth of bodily tissue, but is something caused by the conditions of daily life. Whenever someone is enclosed within a thick and impenetrable shell of anxieties, worries and problems from which he cannot emerge into the world of joy and peace, (we consider him as suffering from psychosomatic illness.(١

:Freud says

The primitive man satisfied his desires in a better way than the civilised man. His life was free from mental anxieties and cares, and he did not suffer from psychic ailments. But since the advent of civilisation, industry and urbanisation, man came to (suffer from serious mental illnesses.(٢

The Cause of Psychic Afflictions

One of the factors responsible for anxiety is acquisitiveness. In a social environment where people's thoughts revolve around the axis of materialism, where wealth and passing material comforts are considered the criteria of prosperity and misfortune, and where everyone is constantly after the satisfaction of this inner urge, life is undoubtedly full of perpetual stress and anxiety. That is because no matter however extensive one's efforts may be, he cannot satisfy his endless greed, fill his mental .vacuum, and realise all his desires and wishes

Also, often there arise insuperable obstacles in the way of his desires and goals, which lead him into various kinds

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.Kelidhaye Khushbakhti, trans. from English into Persian by Ahmad Aram, p. ٢٨۵ -١
.Otto Friedman, Rawanshenasr dar khidmat-e siyasat, ١٣١ -٢

of misgivings and torments. His mind and nerves are greatly disturbed as a result of this mental vexation. Moreover, since his attachment is to un-enduring things, which are prone every moment to destruction and extinction, their transitory charm cannot give tranquillity to his tormented life. Such a person, no doubt, will not feel happy .within himself

Another important factor that causes spiritual anguish is the thought of death and absolute extinction. When death is believed to be the last limit of life and the end of everything, the awesome phantom of non-existence darkens the soul and pours bitterness into every joy of life. Psychic strain, despair and despondency, especially in .the later part of life, will put him in a state of painful torture

Similarly, a haunting fear of encountering some undefined danger-something one fears without being able to express precisely what terrifies him-misgivings and apprehensions cripple the soul and shatter man's debilitated nerves like a sledge .hammer

One becomes constantly listless as a result of financial insecurity or inadequacy; another is agitated on account of his unmanageable wealth and is beset with a thousand financial cares, some fret at the difficulty of meeting their commitments due to unfavourable factors and justify their always remaining in a state of consternation. Some are so full of scruples about certain particulars that they tire and exhaust .everyone about themselves

Such persons, as a matter of principle, are those whose anxiety seeks an outlet in order to surface, and they are constantly after some fresh

pretext to start lamenting and complaining. The problems of life take a specially fearsome aspect in the evenings, for the fatigue resulting from day's work draws a curtain over the intellect and suppresses its power of rational judgement. At such times it no longer possesses its usual vigour, whereas the power of imagination is still active; its figments and fancies, finding the arena empty without a rival, torment the .person severely

If misgivings and futile apprehensions were to occur to anyone as a result of some small mistake, he should know that something that shouldn't have happened has taken place and there is no use in getting troubled about it. Moreover, he has no right to complain about what he had to suffer as a result of his own act. Everyone must reap what he has sown and if he has sowed a bad seed who is to blame? If one becomes upset by his mistake and sees its consequences to be much graver than .they really are, he would fail to make amends, for that would divide his attention

That which is certain is that one cannot succeed in solving one's problems with agitation and vexation, for agitation does not increase the capacity of one who has made a mistake, and regret and sorrow cannot change what is past. The only result that one obtains from his gloomy thoughts is to make his life gloomy and paralyse his activity. Peace of mind is necessary for one to disentangle the issues through

reflection, and then try not to repeat the mistake. It is by correct reasoning that man .can bring a discipline in his moral conduct

Too Much Concern for the Unknown Future

The extent of attention that one directs to the future or the present greatly affects one's spiritual well-being. There are some people who give an extraordinary importance to the future; as a result they miss the opportunity to benefit from the present. Even if no danger should threaten them presently, they are afraid that some unpleasant accident may befall them. They are overwhelmed by a fear, which is as .strong as they would feel in the face of a real danger

However, one must remember that the past has no influence on the present and the future too is unforeseeable. The future events that should make one worried and concerned are those which are definite. But it goes without saying that such events .are few and rarely do events turn out according to one's forecasts

William John Reilly, a researcher belonging to the Carnegie Institute, writes: If you reflect you will see that amongst your friends, and even within your own family, those who have a positive way of thinking fascinate you more than the others. You like to be with them most of the time. Of course, there are also cynics amongst them who create trouble and headaches for you. Those who have a positive way of thinking are .happier, livelier and more active

,They get things done and make them work. They might make many mistakes

but then they have the perspicacity to acknowledge their mistakes and correct them. They have the determination to start all over again. They don't waste time worrying or getting upset over something that will never happen. In every twenty-four hours about more than twenty million meteorites enter the earth's atmosphere. But there is no reliable record of any person getting killed anywhere due to the falling of any of .these meteors

Mark Twain said, "I am an old man and I know many calamities and misfortunes. But most of them have never happened." Life is a continuous stream of problems, and these have to be confronted with a determination. Many of the problems that engage out mind, which we allow to upset us and spoil several hours of our life, and at times a whole day, are actually insignificant and of no consequence. The difficulty is that at (the time we are not capable of noticing their insignificance.(۱

And then whether these probable dangers really take place or not, the present anxiety has no result except diminishing one's physical and spiritual capacities. In .different stages of life one may encounter events that block the way of success

These events are not exceptional and happen for everyone. We cannot alter the eternal laws of nature and make things happen according to our wishes. That was in relation to external dangers. As to the dangers that threaten man from within, they are no less significant than the external ones and sometimes are of

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۱- William John Reilly, Twelve Rules for Straight Thinking, Persian trans. Tafakkur-e .sahih, p. ۱۰۸

a more serious character. There is a destructive force in every individual that threatens his life. This danger that accumulates within man's being is the same as anxiety and anguish, and the person who carries it within him may be unconscious of .its presence

Should the physical and mental energies that are consumed by fear and anxiety concerning imaginary dangers be spent in fruitful tasks, that can yield valuable and brilliant results. Everyone can recall the amount of precious time that he has spent musing about the ways of encountering possible accidents. Exceptions aside, one may say that the actual hardships and misfortunes that most persons face are quite .insignificant in comparison to the imaginary calamities that torment them

Kronin writes: Make a list of the things that you consider the causes of your worries and anxieties. When these causes are down on the paper you will see that, in general, most of them are vague, indistinct and unimportant. Most of the time the balance sheet of our worries and cares appears as follows. Forty percent of them are such calamities as will never take place. Thirty percent of them relate to the past or the .future sorrows, which not even the sympathies of the whole world can alter

Twelve percent of them consist of unfounded fear of loss of health. An eight percent may really be causes for worry and anxiety. A realistic examination will lead us further to drop some of these latter causes. Then, we will see

that that which we usually fear most only happens rarely in actual reality. Many are the woes that trouble our hearts on account of melancholic self-pity. There is only one remedy for the disease of egoism. We should bring about such a change in our world .that we cease regarding ourselves as its centre and axis

Rather, we should take others into account and realise the fact that our being is a part of the human society and that our life depends upon and is subject to the welfare and misfortune of the family, community, nation and group to which we belong. After these difficulties are finally analysed and no solution is found, to immerse oneself in sorrow and grief is a kind of faithlessness; for such a despair signifies the absence of .faith in the need for God's help

No wisdom or philosophy, however sublime, can be of benefit to a man who locks himself in the prison of sorrow and grief. If we employ wisdom by following the lead of reason, we will be able to elevate our lives to a height beyond the reach of our inner number-one enemy, and attain a real spiritual peace.(۱)

Mental anxiety visibly affects all the tasks one performs and sometimes lead one unconsciously into deviant paths and to make irrational responses. Another harm caused by mental worry is that it deprives one of self-confidence. Many people make it their habit to constantly complain regarding their ill fortune and fate and are never

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۱- Danestanihaye jahan-e 'ilm, pp. ۴۸-۵۱.

satisfied with their life. They imagine that they cannot prosper in life unless all their affairs are set in order and unless they possess considerable wealth and all the means of comfort. They look for happiness in the distant horizons of the future while they squander the great asset of life, the precious moments of today, for the sake of the future's dream, whereas if they really care for their happiness they would discover it in plain and peaceful lives; because that which is of basic significance in life is the present, and the future, which appears to be a heaven in their eyes, would .assume the appearance of a frightful hell as soon as they reach it

One who is tired and fed up with his present state of life and awaits better days that lie beyond the dark and uncertain horizon, must wake up from the slumber of ignorance and seek his lost ideal in these wearisome days of today, not in an imaginary and unknown future. The obstacles that he sees in the way of realisation of his goals may be the product of his own thinking, and his success and triumphs may lie hidden in the present itself. If the seed of today should remain unsown, tomorrow will not yield its fruit. Life cannot be lived twice so that one may make amends for his .earlier mistakes

A wise human being derives the maximum benefit from the passing moments of life, which pass quietly and soundlessly like rain

drops falling into the dark ocean of extinction and annihilation. He does not let them go in vain. As a result, with each day his situation improves, the horizon of his life .becomes more radiant, and his soul becomes vaster

He remains steady and unmoved like the centre in a wheel in the face of accidents and unpleasant events. Should the wave of a calamity pass over his head, he is not swept off his feet. He draws benefit from pleasant events and takes lesson from undesirable incidents. He does not expect the world to change in order that events happen according to his wishes. Finally, he spends the hours of his life in such a way .that at the end of the day he does not have any regret or remorse

There are some others who care neither for the present nor the future. The today does not interest them and they expect nothing from the future. Rather, they live in constant agitation due to the regret of having lost the opportunities offered by the past and which now lie buried in the graveyard of non-existence. Instead of pursuing their way with earnestness and composure on the plain of life, they always look behind themselves like someone lost in a vast desert. They keep reviewing the errors and inauspicious happenings of the past and waste their lives. What is surprising is .that while they let the present slip, they regret for the moments of the past

There is no doubt that ruminating

over the mistakes and unhappy episodes of the past and burning oneself in the flames of sorrow and regret does not do any good. Moreover, it exhausts and debilitates the soul and lets one's vital powers go waste so that one remains no longer .capable of choosing the right course in life in conformity with his interests

What we have said concerning giving attention to the present does not mean that one should do something today without paying attention to its evil consequences in the future. What we mean is that one should not let one's peace of mind be disturbed by .regret for the past and fear regarding the future

Clinging to Deviant Means

Need and deprivation cause suffering, and for this reason the mass of people are in perpetual battle against need and de- privation. But the people all whose material needs are satisfied become subject to a kind of spiritual malaise and agony. In order to escape this state of nervousness and agitation they often opt for methods and ways that lead to destruction of their vital and intellectual powers. For instance, they take refuge in alcohol or drugs, which appear to them as the only remedy, and become addicted to these destructive evils so as to escape their anguish and inner .torment for a short time

They think that they can do nothing else except seek refuge in alcoholism and drug addiction to obtain relief from their pain and suffering; but in reality they undermine their own personality, For everyone knows that

addiction to these things for relief from anxiety and inner distress does not lead to good consequences; for as soon as the effect of intoxication is gone, his anguish returns to badly torment him again. Moreover, the effect produced by drugs is gradually diminished due to continuous use and they themselves give rise to many .diseases and afflictions

:Psychologists explain the causes of taking refuge in alcoholism as follows

Those who are used to alcohol are not capable of satisfying their wants in a complex and complicated world. Therefore, in order to evade difficulties and delve in unrealistic fancies they take resort in alcohol. Alcohol makes a drastic effect on the nervous system and, in addition to that, enfeebles the rational faculty. One who is drunk behaves in an unnatural manner, and intoxication does an irremediable harm to him. He not only injures his own health, but achieves nothing by escaping problems by .taking resort in a harmful beverage

Ultimately, he loses respect in the eyes of his friends, family and relatives. When he returns to his ordinary state, his capacity to confront his difficulties is further diminished. The consumption of alcohol does not afford any progress in the solution of problems, and one who makes alcohol a means of evading problems only makes his hardships graver. Then this exacerbation of the difficulty induces him again to turn to .alcohol

Some kinds of daydreaming and the use of alcohol are similar in regard to the escape from problems. Of course, the use

of alcohol is physically more harmful. In these two kinds of escape, the person does not attempt to solve the difficulty by the means of reasoning. Rather, he wants to evade it, and since the escape cannot be permanent, he is forced to return to the real world in a state of greater disharmony and anguish.(۱)

A man's thoughts and ideas exercise a profound influence on his spiritual well-being. His progress and backwardness and, in a word, his spiritual qualities depend on his way of thinking. Various factors have an effect on one's way of thinking and looking at things. One who enjoys an active intellect is not overwhelmed by total despondency in his inability to obtain material resources and derive benefit from the external world.

The world does not appear to him to be dark and frightful. Rather, he immediately closes shut the windows of the spirit that face external things and turns to the enjoyment of spiritual pleasures. Thereby he takes himself into a world free from the bondage of suffering and where he can satiate himself with the cup of felicity and peace.

However, those who are short-sighted seek refuge in external means in order to seek freedom from the chains of anguish. Because, on the one hand, man's wishes and desires are in a state of perpetual change and, on the other, there is nothing permanent and enduring in this turbulent world. Should man's happiness depend on external things, it would always be prone to destruction. Therefore, such

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۱ - Marguerite Malm and Herbert Sorenson, Psychology for Living, Pers. trans. Rawanshendsi baray-e zistan, p. ۲۳۰.

a person, like a drowning man, clings to everything that he can catch hold of but which cannot save him. Ultimately, nothing that is transitory and impermanent can give him .true peace

:Carlos describes the wretchedness of this group of people in these words

One abandons his beautiful mansion in order to escape monotony, and fruitlessly takes resort in various means. Another speedily runs away from his wife and children, like a fire engine hastening to extinguish a fire, but as soon as he reaches his destination he again comes face to face with his pernicious enemy: spiritual boredom and malaise. Thereat he goes back with the same haste that he had gone forth, (confounded and lost like a madman.(١

The Profound Effect of Suffering

Basically, man's creation is such that he is compelled to bear a lot of physical and spiritual hardships in order to satisfy the needs of his life. Because it is in the course of this toil and endeavour for obtaining the material means of life that his intellectual and .spiritual faculties acquire their vigour and growth

Hardship and suffering has a profound and extensive influence in life. The spiritual powers of great men receive their burnish under the stress of calamities and shine .forth better in the darkness of adversity

Had not man, since the first days of his existence, not felt wretched on account ,of his ignorance and ignorance, he would not have made any effort to obtain relief from this malady and would have languished in the darkness of ignorance and savageness, and

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Shafiq Hamadani, Afkar-e Schopenhaur, (Tehran: Chapkhaneh-ye Kayhah, ١٣٢۶ H. -١ .Sh.), p. ۶۴

we would not see today any trace of the manifestations of his intellect, morality and spirituality. It is the painful feeling of being ignorant that made him make an .unrelenting struggle against ignorance

The all-round advancement of man and the foundations of all his progress in civic and social matters are based on this truth. Most of the great social movements that were a point of departure for human progress and a leap towards human edification were the consequence of crushing hardships and difficulties. Although adversities and vicissitudes are bitter and repugnant in appearance, and pleasures and joys are pleasing and attractive, the matter is in reality quite the opposite. Because the pursuit of pleasures and lusts leads to decadence and disaster, whereas adversities and .hardships carry in their bosom felicity and success

There is a definite interrelation between experience of suffering and attainment of felicity. There is a cause-and-effect relation between hardships and adversities on the one hand and felicity and achievement on the other. Hegel, the German philosopher, says: Life is not made for happiness, but for achievement. The history of the world is not the theatre of happiness; periods of happiness are blank pages in it, for they are periods of harmony; and this dull content is unworthy of a man. History is made only in those periods in which the contradictions of reality are being resolved by growth, as the hesitation and awkwardness of youth pass into the ease and order of (maturity.(۱

Metals, in order to

Will Durant, The Story of Philosophy, (New York, Washington Square Press, ۱۹۶۸), P. -۱ .۲۶۷

be separated from impurities, are melted in hot furnaces. Hardships of life have a similar result for the human being. They purify him and purge him of impurities, and prepare him for fulfilling his human duties. Ultimately, no individual can attain to felicity and survival except in the shadow of suffering. The Qur'an says:

(Indeed We have created man in the cradle of trouble and suffering. (۹۰:۴)

Imam al-Sadiq, may peace be upon him, said:

Indeed, of all people the severest of sufferings and afflictions are faced by the prophets, and after them by others in proportion to their degree of merit.(۱)

In order to drive home the same point, Rumi says:

Cast was the wheat grain under the soil, Then, ears of corn were gathered from its dust, Then, it was ground between the millstones, And lo, its worth rose and it became life-giving bread! Then the bread was crushed under the teeth, And lo, it became intellect, soul and gainful understanding!

A European thinker says:

Hardships and difficulties make up the touchstone of morality. In the same way as some plants must be squeezed to give out their perfume, so also some natures have to be subjected to hardship in order that their essential talents and merits become manifest. There is no ease and comfort in the world that does not change into pain and adversity. So also, there is no hardship that does not ultimately lead to happiness and felicity. In each of these conditions, the results that we derive depend on our

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۱- Al-Majlisi, Bihar al-anwar, vol. ۱۵, part ۱, p. ۵۳.

.use or misuse of it

Complete happiness and ease are not to be found in this world. Even if, supposedly, they were to exist, they would not be fruitful, nor would they offer any kind of good or benefit. Among the teachings that have been delivered to man to this day, the most worthless and hollow is the one that invites him to comfort and ease; for, under all .circumstances, defeat and hardship are wiser teachers than happiness and comfort

Defeat reforms and strengthens an individual's character; suffering and hardship bring discipline and awareness to nature. They initiate the person in the rites of patience and forbearance, developing the most sublime thoughts and ideas in his mind. Hipper says: "What is it that leads to the development of man's profoundest thoughts? It is not knowledge or science. It is not ability and expertise either. Neither .it is emotion or feeling

Only suffering and hardship can fathom the depths of human thought. Perhaps, that is why there is so much suffering in the world. The angel charged with afflicting with suffering and hardship has rendered a greater service to this world's people than (what the angel of well-being and healing has brought to the world."(١

The Definite Role of Faith in Spiritual Peace

A study of the history of human progress proves that the supports of man's civilisation and culture have always rested on the shoulders of those for whom the power of faith had made it easy for them to bear the heavy burden of hardship and pain

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.Samuel Smith, Akhlaq-e Samuel, vol. ٢, pp. ٢٠۴-٢٠۵ -١

whose negative effects were neutralised by the faith present in their strong hearts. Psychologists generally admit that the power of faith is amazingly effective in the cure of psychic diseases and creation of confidence and inner peace.

In cases where severe hardships shatter man's personality and divest him of his hope and will power, trust in God produces a profound and undeniable effect in a defeated soul. Failure, adversity, and defeat can never create a storm in the pure hearts of godly men and make them suffer despair and loss of self-assurance and self-respect. Jung, the well-known psychoanalyst, writes:

Among all my patients in the second half of life-that is to say, over thirty five-there has not been one whose problem in the last resort was not that of finding a religious outlook on life. It is safe to say that every four of them fell ill because he had lost that which the living religions of every age have given to their followers, and none of them has been really healed who did not regain his religious outlook.... Here then, the clergyman stands before a vast horizon.... It is indeed high time for the clergyman and the psychotherapist to join forces to meet this great spiritual task.(۱)

The faith in God, like a relief valve, helps regulate psychic urges which are themselves the mainspring of man's spiritual afflictions. The faith in God gives a visage of perfect beauty to life, because when one has the conviction that everything does not come to

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۱- C. G. Jung, Modern Man in Search of a Soul (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, ۱۹۶۶), trans. by W. S. Dell and Cary F. Baynes, p. ۲۶۴.

an end with this life it creates an inner peace and makes him traverse the entire course of life with steadiness and moderation. Acquisitiveness, greed and avarice, which are one of the factors responsible for anxiety, are moderated as a result of faith in God and observance of the moral precepts of religion. The hope of great rewards and the fear of severe punishments make man refrain from rapacity and avoid unreasonable and uncontrolled fondness for material things, glitter and ostentation. As a result, a desirable and serene equilibrium worthy of man's humanity is brought about within his soul. Similarly, faith in resurrection and afterlife removes the intolerable strain induced by the idea of absolute annihilation and extinction from the human spirit, for the person with such a faith is convinced that at the threshold of death the door to another world will open in front of him and he will enter an eternal life and its everlasting bounties that cannot be compared with the joys of this world. This faith results in eliminating another agent of mental anxiety which is the anguish of absolute non-existence. Faith not only removes anguish and anxiety from the human heart, it can protect it from being overwhelmed by agitation and agony. The :Qur'an describes the preventive role of faith in these words

If you have faith, do not yield to fear and sorrow, for you have an u p per hand over (the others on account of this asset of faith. (۳:۱۳۹

This verse drives

home the point that faith is a firm shield for the soul in its encounter with the agents of anxiety, producing a certain immunity in the human being. If one should lack a complete faith, and should the agents of anxiety penetrate to the core of his soul, it is again faith by relying on which he can free his mind from the burden of agony and :purge the effects of suffering from the tablet of his heart. The Qur'an says

In God's remembrance and reliance upon Him are at rest the hearts of those who ... (have faith and do righteous deeds. (۱۳:۲۸

(It is He Who sent down tranquillity into the hearts of the faithful... (۴۸:۴

The Qur'an considers steadiness and security to be the characteristics of those whose :hearts are full of faith

Mental peace and security are qualities of those who have faith and who have not (drawn a veil of wrongdoing over their faith (۶:۸۲

(Lo, fear and sorrow do not affect the friend of God. (۱۰:۶۲

In a sermon on the benefits of remembrance of God, 'Ali, the Commander of the :Faithful, may peace be upon him, describes the characteristics of godly human beings

God, the Exalted, has made His remembrance the light and burnish of the hearts. It is by the means of His remembrance that the hearts recover their hearing after being deaf, regain their sight after being blind, and become soft and tractable after being savage and rebellious. It has always been the case that in periods of

spiritual torpor, from time to time, God Almighty has confided His inspiration to the thoughts of His sublime servants and spoken to them through their intellects.(۱)

The state of people possessing faith is not at all comparable with the condition of materialistic and irreligious persons in encounter with life's vicissitudes and its bitter experiences, for the two are as apart as the earth and the sky.

During the Prophet's times one of the Muslim women in Madinah received the news of the loss of three of her close relatives in the Battle of Uhud. She set out on a camel to the scene of battle to bring the bodies of the martyrs. Having laid the lifeless and bloody bodies of her dear ones on the camel, she was returning to Madinah when on the way she met one of the wives of the Holy Prophet, may peace be upon him and his Family. The Prophet's wife, who was concerned about the Prophet's welfare, asked her if she knew anything in this regard. That bereaved woman, as she held the reins of her camel and blood dripped to the ground from the bodies that it carried, answered with a peculiar serenity and calmness that sprung from her firm and steady faith: "I have a glad news for you: the Prophet hasn't suffered any harm in the battle, and every lesser grief is tolerable in front of such a great and precious blessing." The Prophet's wife asked her; "Whose bodies are these?" She answered:

۱- Nahj al-balaghah, ed. Dr. Subhi al-Salih, p. ۳۴۲.

One of them is my husband's, another is that of my son, and the third one belongs to" my brother, I am taking them to Madinah to bury them." What agent except faith could give such indescribable serenity and calm to this bereaved soul? Jean Jacques Rousseau writes: If we were immortal we would all be miserable; no doubt it is hard to die, but it is sweet to think that we shall not live forever, and that a better life will put an end to the sorrows of this world. If we had the offer of immortality here below, who would accept the sorrowful gift? What resources, what hopes, what consolation would be left against the cruelties of fate and man's injustice? The ignorant man never looks before; he knows little of the value of life and does not fear to lose it; the wise man sees things of greater worth and prefers them to it. Half knowledge and sham wisdom set us thinking about death and what lies beyond it; and they thus create the worst of our ills. The wise man bears life's ills all the better because he knows he must die.(۱)

Taslim and Rida

One who does not possess the asset of faith is quite vulnerable against the unfavourable forces of nature. He considers himself a victim of its overwhelming and tyrannical forces. Even if he does not make a retreat in the first encounter with afflictions and hardships, ultimately, at some fearsome moment, the violent waves of events

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۱- Rousseau, Emile, trans. by Barbara Foxley, pp. ۴۵-۴۶.

will drive him into a deep whirlpool. But one who relies on the logic of religion and does not consider anything except the will of God as being effective in the order of creation, believes that the unavoidable sufferings of life have been decreed by a beneficent creator for the purification of his heart and the disciplining of his soul. Therefore he does not allow hardship and affliction to paralyse his spiritual power. Rather, he maintains his serenity under all circumstances and in every eventuality steers the ship of his existence with the help of God's eternal power to the shores of purity, success, and felicity and even his spiritual joys and pleasures increase despite the burden of suffering. Jabir ibn 'Abd Allah was one of the personalities that had been brought up under Islamic teachings. Once when he fell ill, Imam al-Baqir, the Fifth Imam, may peace be upon him, came to his house to visit him. When the Imam asked Jabir about his condition, the latter replied: "My condition is such that I prefer old age to youth, sickness to health, and death to life." The Imam, may peace be upon him, said to him: "Yet we, the Prophet's family, are not such. If God decrees sickness or health, youth or old age, life or death for one of us, we accept it most willingly. The principle of rida (satisfaction) vis-à-vis the vicissitudes of life is our custom."

Bertrand Russell says:

Resignation, however, has also its part to play in

the conquest of happiness, and it is a part no less essential than that played by effort. The wise man, though he will not sit down under preventable misfortunes, will not waste time and emotion upon such as are unavoidable, and when such as are in themselves avoidable he will submit to it if the time and labour required to avoid them would interfere with the pursuit of some more important project. Many people get into a fret or a fury over every little thing that goes wrong, and in this way waste a great deal of energy that might be more usefully employed. Even in the pursuit of really important objects it is unwise to become so deeply involved emotionally that the thought of possible failure becomes a constant menace to peace of mind. Christianity taught submission to the will of God, and even for those who cannot accept this phraseology there should be something of the same kind pervading all their activities. Efficiency in a practical task is not proportional to the emotion that we put into it, indeed, emotion is sometimes an obstacle to efficiency. The attitude required is that of doing one's best while leaving the issue to fate.(۱)

Of course, in speaking of resignation and forbearance vis-à-vis fate what is meant are the mishaps and unpredictable events that lie beyond the range of human power and ingenuity; otherwise those misfortunes and ills that are products of a corrupt society and pathological social conditions, their roots must

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Bertrand Russell, The Conquest of Happiness (London: Unwin Books, ۱۹۷۵), pp. ۱۸۰--۱
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be sought within the social structure. To alter such a distressing state of affairs is within the scope of man's will. Hence one must not justify submission to violation of his rights as resignation and surrender to God-ordained fate. Dale Carnegie, a brilliant :writer on topics relating to psychological subjects of popular interest, writes

My father had lost his health due to debt, hardship, poverty and bad luck. The doctor told my mother that he would not survive for more than six months. Several times my father attempted to end his life by hanging himself with a rope or by throwing himself into the river. Years later he told me that the only thing that kept him from committing suicide at that time was the firm and unshakeable faith of my mother. She was convinced that if we love God and obey His commandments everything would be set right. She was right. Ultimately everything got right. My father lived for another forty-two years. Throughout those difficult years my mother never became upset. She placed her hardships and problems before God and in that little and lonely village .cottage she would pray to Him not to deny us His love and support

In the same way as the benefits of electricity, water and good food have been effective and important in my life, the benefits and advantages of religion have been of great significance. Electricity, water and food help me provide a better, more complete and comfortable life. But the benefit of religion

.is many times greater than that of any of these things

Religion gives me faith and courage. It relieves me from trepidation, anxiety, fear and alarm. It gives a direction and goal to life. Religion completes my happiness to a great extent and bestows upon me an abundant peace. It helps me lead a calm and peaceful existence in the midst of the tempests of life.(۱)

Einstein, the famous scientist of the twentieth century, after offering a classification of religions and while explaining the third kind of religions which he calls 'cosmic religious feeling', describes the kind of feeling it produces in man. He writes:

The individual feels the futility of human desires and aims and the sublimity and marvellous order which reveal themselves both in nature and in the world of thought. Individual existence impresses him as a sort of prison and he wants to experience the universe as significant whole.(۲)

The cause of the anxieties and mental anguish of many people must be sought in their way of thinking and their view of life. They imagine that they have come into this world to enjoy its pleasures without any restraints and when they confront a reality that is contrary to their conceptions they often complain and blame the world, the order of things, and their own situation. In the same way as water extinguishes fire, our own misfortunes and hardships are forgotten when we pay attention to the miseries and misfortunes of others and reflect about them. But there are some people

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۱- Dale Carnegie, Ain-e zindagi, trans. into Persian by Jahangir Afkhami.

۲- Albert Einstein, Ideas and Opinions (New Delhi: Rupa Co., ۱۹۸۴), p.۳۸.

who imagine that they are the victims of all the misery and grief that there is and that hard times do not give them a moment's relief, where they have quite a different opinion about others and imagine that they are always prosperous and happy and .face no hardship in life

Unlimited Expectations

The great extent of one's expectations leads one to become a constant victim of sorrow and distress. Those who are realistic in their outlook consider an immoderate amount of wealth to be an obstacle to happiness and mental peace. Happiness and wretchedness, peace and anxiety have their own particular criterion in which wealth, position and prestige do not play any role. There are narrow-minded rich persons in this world who go hungry despite all their riches and who do not know any comfort, and there are many poor people who lament on account of their poverty. As a subtle :poet says

Alas, that the golden cup of self-contentment, Was turned into a beggars bowl by our !acquisitiveness

:Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, may peace be upon him, said'

No treasure is as plentiful as contentment and no wealth can overcome the feeling of being wretched and destitute to the extent of contentment (rida). The one who is not greedy and is content with the income that meets the needs of his life has procured (the means of his well-being and mental peace.(۱

Also in the opinion of researchers in the field of man's psychic life, a high level of expectations is a source

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.Nahj al-balaghah, ed. Fayd al-Islam, p. ۱۲۵۰ -۱

of anxiety and dissatisfaction, whereas the observance of moderation and contentment gives mental peace and security. In the field of mental health there is a :principle called 'the principle of contentment' according to which

The lesser one's expectations are, the greater is one's peace of mind, and the greater they are, the lesser it is. To the extent that we minimise our expectations, we will also reduce the probability of defeat and failure. As a result, fear and hope, anxiety and agitation, and the oppressive feeling of expectation that besiege us prior to the achievement of success are automatically reduced. In fact, the principle of happiness is no other than the principle of contentment. However, one should remember that the meaning of the principle of happiness and contentment is not that one should sit idle and refrain from every kind of activity and effort. What is meant by the principle of happiness is getting to know of one's own limits, abilities and means and becoming reconciled with one's capacities and powers. It means that one should not extend one's expectations beyond the ken of one's capacities and make unrealistic and (extravagant demands upon them.(١

Faith in Immortality

Islam propels the human heart towards everlasting life. Although faith in resurrection is a real and living faith that raises man over the plane of the sensible and vitalises his faculties for the realisation of sublime human ideals, it does not restrain man from enjoying the world's bounties. But it restrains the self from pursuing these joys in

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١ - Muhammad Hasan Nasir al-Din Sahib zamani, Ansu-ye Chehrakh (Tehran: 'Ata' i, ١٣۴٣ H. Sh.) vol. ٣ of Ruh-e bashar, p. ٢١٣.

an unruly, self-willed manner in the expansive arena of life and counters wayward greed and acquisitiveness by subjecting it to controls and restraints. When one is really convinced that the world offers scant and limited opportunities, that its joys are insignificant and that its short days are devoid of real delights, then enjoyments of this world lose their glitter and glamour in his eyes and he does not regret if he fails to obtain more than what falls to his lot. Thus he does not become subject to anguish, sorrow and fear. His attitude towards material benefits is not like that of someone who is in a haste and perpetual agitation due to the fear lest death should one day put an end to his pursuit of joys. Rather, he possesses a peacefulness of mind and tranquillity of conscience. This confidence and serenity no doubt add to the pleasure that he derives from the bounties of life, which he utilises rationally and with dignity. Accordingly, a person with faith knows that these bounties are means for attaining to higher ends, not the end and goal of life itself in whose pursuit one should spend all his life and moreover lose his spiritual equilibrium. The painful stresses produced by anxiety also lead to physical illness and the loss of physical vigour. In order to safeguard one's physical health and well-being and save oneself from the influence of self-destructive forces within one, one must not allow anxiety and sorrow to overwhelm his

,soul. 'Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, may peace be upon him

(Grief and anxiety have a destructive effect on the body.(۱

(Grief and agony have a wasting effect on the body.(۲

Drink up (i.e. suppress) your sorrow and resentment, because it is the sweetest and the most pleasant of drinks from the viewpoint of result and ultimate outcome.(۳)

Scientific investigations have revealed that some physical ailments are the effect of psychic anxieties and outbursts of emotion. Munn, the well-known psychologist, :writes

Some of the physiological concomitants of emotion are evident in everyday experience. Palpitation of the heart, accelerated breathing, a sinking feeling in the stomach, sweating, trembling and many other organic phenomena are commonly-reported aspects of emotion.... Milder forms and intensities of emotion provide a motivational background to much that we do. In emergency situations, largely through adrenal secretions, we have energy in excess of that normally present.... The emotionally aroused organism is aroused all over. There is an overall interaction of receptors, muscles, internal organs, and nervous mechanisms, with resulting changes in blood chemistry, in brain waves and in the physiological reactions already considered... One frequent outcome of prolonged stress, emotional or otherwise, is the production of gastric ulcers. According to Selye, this is due in part to the overactivity of the adrenal cortex. The first clear evidence that ulcers can be produced by emotional stress came from observations of a man whose stomach was exposed and whose gastric activities were thus observable.... During two weeks of prolonged anxiety, the subject developed small

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۱- Al-Amidi, Ghurar al-hikam, p. ۲۳.

۲- Ibid., p. ۱۶.

۳- Ibid., p. ۳۵۱.

haemorrhages in the lining of his stomach and also a heightened gastric acidity. Something resembling a small ulcer finally developed and the investigators were impressed with the possibility that "the chain of events which begins with anxiety and conflict and associated overactivity of the stomach and ends with haemorrhage or perforation is that which is involved in the natural history of peptic ulcer in human beings." Since the above observations were made, there has been additional direct evidence that psychological stress produces ulcers.(۱) That which distinguishes the world of a realistic person from the world of an immature one is imagination. A superficial and shallow person who has seen only the appearances of things is so much enchanted by his faculty of imagination that his heart is swept every moment by the waves of endless desire. As soon as he comes to see the course of events as an obstacle in his way, his spirit becomes submerged in a fearsome gloom and he is put at a complete loss. If this crisis is accompanied with a weakness of the soul that may lead him to commit suicide. By contrast, the realistic person is free from the bondage of childish and unrealistic notions. He views things in a wide and extensive perspective. He does not see things partially and does not allow delusions to influence his practical life. Rather, he strives to conform himself to his physical and social environment and with the facts of his inner and external life.

۱- Munn, Norman. L., Psychology: The Fundamentals of Human Adjustment, ۴th ed., Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, ۱۹۶۱, pp. ۳۲۱, ۳۲۵, ۳۴۲, ۳۵۲.

One who has a genuinely balanced personality and a spirit possessing equilibrium is not shaken by every gust of wind. The reason that some people feel upset and uneasy in times of leisure is their inadequacy of spiritual strength and the absence of secure foothold. Therefore, they turn to harmful and unwholesome modes of entertainment in order to kill time. But the stronger a person is in respect of his inner powers, the lesser does he stand in need of the external environment. A country that has lesser need of imports has more steady economic foundations. One who has adequate inner assets and is not in constant need of outside assistance can deliver himself from dangerous activities and destructive conduct. He can bring about a state of moderation in his ethical qualities and alter the impact of external factors on his soul. Jean Jacques Rousseau says: Prudence! Prudence which is ever bidding us to look forward into the future, a future which in many cases we shall never reach; here is the real source of all our troubles! How mad it is for so short-lived a creature as man to look forward into a future to which he rarely attains, while he neglects the present which is his? This madness is all the more fatal since it increases with years, and the old, always timid, prudent, and miserly, prefer to do without necessaries to-day that they may have luxuries at a hundred. Thus we grasp everything, we cling to everything;

we are anxious about time, place, people, things, all that is and will be; we ourselves are but the least part of ourselves. We spread ourselves, so to speak, over the whole world, and all this vast expanse becomes sensitive. No wonder our woes increase when we may be wounded on every side. How many princes make themselves miserable for the love of lands they have never seen, and how many merchants lament in Paris over some misfortune in the Indies! ...We no longer live in our own place, we live outside it. What does it profit us to live in such fear of death, when all that makes life worth living is our own? Oh, man! Live your own life and you will no longer be wretched. Keep to your appointed place in the order of nature and nothing can tear you from it. Do not will against the stern law of necessity, nor waste in vain resistance the strength bestowed on you by heaven, not to prolong or extend your existence, but to preserve it so far and so long as heaven pleases. Your freedom and your power extend as far and no further than your natural strength; anything more is but slavery, deceit, and trickery.(۱)

Imam al-Sadiq, may peace be upon him, says:

Actually man's life in the world is like a fleeting hour. Whatever that has taken place in it up to the present is gone and you do not feel its pleasure or pain. As to

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۱- Rousseau, Emile, pp. ۴۶-۴۷.

that which is to come, you don't know what it is. All that remains in your hand of your precious life are your present moments. Therefore use them for the purpose of obtaining control over yourself and strive therein for your self-improvement and salvation. Be steadfast in obeying God and observing His commands and refrain from sin and violation of God's ordinances.(۱)

If one's involvement with the past or the future is for the sake of escaping the problems of the present, it is a psychic sickness or prelude to such sickness in the opinion of psychologists, who say:

If one were to decide to pay no attention to the present and should one fail to utilise the opportunities that arise, and should one continually go on saying to oneself and others, "It is true that I am not good at my studies, but wait and see what I will do upon entering life. All those who did poorly in their studies nevertheless succeeded in real life. I have certain ideas and dreams concerning the future"-this kind of thinking shows that one wishes to escape from real life and from his present. The psychologist knows well that these fancies do not accord with reality and are nothing but fallacious reasoning. This kind of thinking concerning the future is harmful, and that which is almost certain is that the person with this kind of thinking will fail to achieve success in the future like the present. If thinking about the future and the

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۱- Al-Kulayni, Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۲, p. ۴۵۴.

past occupies all one's time and energy and causes one to neglect the daily problems with which he is faced, such a person is definitely unhealthy and poorly adjusted. If one cannot face his present problems and constantly thinks about the future in order to escape them, this thinking about the future becomes a substitute for attention to the present. Such a substitute, which does not help in the solution of one's problems, is worthless and injurious.(۱) The leader of world's free men, al-Husayn ibn 'Ali, may :peace be upon him, said

When a wise man is visited by an affliction, he is not enveloped by grief. Rather, with forbearance and farsightedness he removes the rust of sorrow from his heart and .makes use of his intellect to find a solution

With the power at our disposal we can struggle against the defeats and adversities that assault us from every direction, and whenever there is a spell in this battle, one's unused energies, like a heavy burden, torment him who is forced to use them for futile ends. One of the effective ways of relief from anxiety is to engage in some profitable activity. Those who in times of inner turmoil engage in some beneficial activity obtain relief during the time that they are busy, and they are delighted and satisfied when they see the fruits of their work. For this reason, though certainly many of such activities consist of a relative relief, they constitute a beneficial and satisfying response and

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۱- Malm Sorenson, Op. cit., p. ۲۳۸.

the mind, at the least, obtains temporary relief from an apparently insoluble personal problem. And particularly if the activity involves a benefit for others it will be good for him too, for it is impossible that someone who is beneficial for others should not be such for himself. Moreover, that will save him from resorting to unwholesome and .injurious ways of keeping himself busy

The Benefit of Unburdening One's Sorrow

Unburdening one's heart with loyal and sincere friends is one of the means of obtaining relief from grief and mental tension. Persons in a state of grief must be given the opportunity to relieve their inward tensions by talking about their hardships .to close friends

Similarly, fellow-feeling for suffering friends, and helping them in relieving their inner tensions and solving their difficulties to the extent of one's capacity is one of the crucial as well as valuable duties of every human being. Someone whose friendship rests on real affection should not be indifferent to or oblivious of his friends in times of crisis. This matter has been given complete attention in the traditions of religious leaders and it has been pointed out that the man of faith is a source of comfort to .others

:The Noble Messenger, may God's blessings be upon him and his Family, said

The best of works near God is to make happy a brother in faith by relieving him of (hunger, distress and sorrow.(١

:Imam al-Sadiq, may peace be upon him, said

Whenever one of you is affected by distress and sorrow, he must bring it

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.Al-Kulayni, Usul al-Kafi, p. ۴٠۵ -١

to the knowledge of his brother so that he may remove the gloom of grief and agony from your heart.(1)

Schachter, the well-known psychologist, says:

If you are unhappy and distressed by your own conduct and condition and are unable to solve your own problem, confide your difficulty to someone that you rely upon and who is wise. Keeping a painful thought, fear, or anxiety to oneself only makes it more persistent and bothersome. Express your secret thought and seek advice from a wise and experienced person. Fear and bad thoughts dwindle and disappear on confronting people. Don't refrain from unburdening yourself before a psychiatrist or a wise friend; for, troublesome thoughts that are consigned to the unconscious will always remain an impediment between us and our mental peace and happiness. It should be known that the suppression of thoughts is of two kinds. Either it occurs naturally without our knowledge and will; that is, our ingenious mind suppresses every troublesome thought without even our noticing it and casts it into the depths of the memory. Or sometimes, knowingly and voluntarily, we banish painful thoughts and insist on not recalling them. This action is called 'repression' in the jargon of psychology. However, that does not in the least diminish the distress arising from that thought, and the more we try to forget it, the more it oppresses us, causing us greater pain and mortification. In any case, a troublesome and distressing thought that we suppress or repress, knowingly or unknowingly, does not

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١- Wasail al Shiah, vol. ٢, p. ۵۵.

leave us alone. Secretly or openly, it continues to torment us, and as long as we do not confide it to some wise person and seek his help and advice, we will not get rid of the suffering and torment.(1)

Maintaining Good Spirits

One thing that is quite effective in diminishing the impact of anxiety and grief is making an effort to appear cheerful and happy:

'Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, may peace be upon him, says:

Keep your good spirits in adversities and maintain a lively disposition in times of affliction.(2)

Always maintain an attitude of satisfaction and conciliation in life in order to be pleasing.(3)

Present-day psychologists also consider sport and maintaining an appearance of gaiety and cheerfulness as an effective and beneficial way of alleviating painful crises as well as an edifying factor of personality. They offer the following advice:

Try to maintain a pleasant expression on your face. Make an effort to always appear so lively and free of sadness and sombreness that everyone who meets you thinks that he has met the best of his friends. If you feel dejected or nervous, try not to manifest this dejection and sadness in your encounter with others. Try to appear cheerful and satisfied.

When you are in good spirits and you impress upon people as being jolly and hearty, others too will act in a genial manner towards you. They will open up in talking to you, and you all will derive pleasure from one another's company. When you get into in a cheerful state, there

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۱- Rushd-e shakhsiyyat, pp. ۱۰۹-۱۱۰.

۲- Ghurar al-hikam p. ۵۶۵.

۳- Ibid., p. ۵۶۴.

.appears an effective behavioural mode in your conduct that attracts others

The first step for being happy and lively are the expressions on one's face. Don't scowl; always keep a smile on your lips. These expression will undoubtedly produce an effect in you and will lighten your inner heaviness. Otherwise sullenness will become a habit with you. People try to avoid morose and gloomy persons. A lively face attracts others, and there is nothing great about looking stern and grim. Some people imagine that if they always keep a stern look on their face, others will be impressed or overawed by them. This is not true. Whenever you feel sad, bring a smile on your lips (and you will see how quickly your sadness disappears.(۱

Chapter ۶: The basis of Social Co-operation

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The delicate feelings and emotions that illuminate the panorama of life in the form of various forms of kindness, help and assistance to one's fellow beings belong to the most sublime of human motives. It is this feeling that intensely affects the human heart on witnessing the sufferings, hardships and afflictions of others and prepares it .for all kinds of self-sacrifice and self-denial

It is an undeniable fact that pleasure and pain, suffering and joy, poverty and prosperity are an inalienable part of man's life. But fortunately many of these sufferings, misfortunes, and afflictions, with all the bitterness and burden they entail, are remediable, and their causes, which blacken the horizon of the lives of the afflicted, like dark and inauspicious clouds, can be cleared with

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.Malm Sorenson, op. cit., pp. ۷۷-۷۸ -۱

.mutual assistance

Man is not merely a living organism but the bearer of the universal message of goodness, wisdom, beauty, and human worthiness. The mutual relations of human beings with one another should be based on sincere reciprocal sympathy, love and co-cooperativeness, not on the basis of ostentation, expedience and a businesslike attitude. The solution of life's problems is impossible without forgiveness, sacrifice, and kindness to fellowmen in critical moments, for sympathy, self-sacrifice and mutual forgiveness are among the pillars of the edifice of social life, which is based on .co-operation

Those, individuals or groups, who have such a spirit in social conduct attain to their full maturity. Those who have concern for life should, in the first place, render it service and play a dear and definite role in the creation of a strong and healthy society. The higher the degree of emotional maturity of persons and the more developed their social outlook, the more will they be attentive to one another's interests. A positive and sympathetic thinking about others, as a mark of developed humanity, will help create a wholesome environment for a better life for the individual. The social sciences prove that true self-interest involves concern for others, co-.cooperativeness, and sympathy

There is a saying which says, "You receive with the same hand that you give." How can one who does not sow the seeds of benevolence reap the fruit of kindness? Accordingly, one's social outlook and ethos constitute the basis of one's human merit and the criterion of the

.individual's personality

On the contrary, the absence of such a spirit in individuals and groups is a sign of backwardness and lack of social maturity. Their indifference, unconcern, and lack of the sense of moral responsibility are symptoms of a psychological disorder and sickness, as much as they are marks of social immaturity. They do not perceive the relatedness of their own lives to the happiness and welfare of others. Such a society .resembles a ship sinking in a storm at sea, where everyone tries to save his own life

To be sure, the habits of sacrifice, forgiveness, and altruism are not easily acquired. :One thinker says

Altruism is difficult at first, but the further we advance on this path the greater becomes our capacity for it, as if benevolent acts were mothers which in the course of !time give birth to numerous offsprings

This is a fact. Serving the people and sacrificing for their sake is hard for someone who is selfish and self-centred, who greedily wants everything for himself and is willing to sacrifice everything in order to attain his own ends. Every effort and endeavour involves discomfort, even thought and understanding. There are different forms of effort. One kind of effort gives vision, broadens the horizons of thought, leads man to truth and the knowledge of the world's realities, helping him obtain the highest rewards in the Hereafter. The other kind of effort leads man into deviance and alienates him from reality. An effort that constantly enlarges the circle of self-interest

with no reasonable limits will lead to the dissolution of the inner faculties that govern .man's moral conduct

There are many persons who consider themselves as being endowed with feeling and emotion; they are dismayed at witnessing the misfortunes and afflictions of others. But they are not willing to make any commitment involving responsibility. They shun any responsibility that may fall upon them and which involves helping the needy in a monetary or some other manner, or requires some effort on their part, or involves foregoing a part of their pleasures. The reason behind such an attitude is that they have not wanted to get used to even small and simple duties that could prepare them .for more significant tasks

To feel the grief and suffering of others is a good and admirable thing. But what is the use of it if that does not lead to action and cannot lighten the burden of those who suffer? What benefit can humanity derive from dormant feelings that hide in the heart and have no effect whatsoever on real life? Mere goodwill for human life is not .sufficient. Genuine goodness inevitably involves action

The Sublimity of Spiritual Pleasures

Striving to solve the problem of others and relieving them of their afflictions is not only the duty of every person, it is one of the best and most sublime pleasures of life. The scope of one's love should be so wide and inclusive that there should be room in it for everyone. Such a love can illuminate

the soul and purge the heart of all suffering and bring true happiness to man, making him feel that everything that there is in the world is beautiful and lovely. A Western scholar writes

There is a reward for every virtue and a punishment for every vice, but this punishment and that reward do not lie beyond virtue and vice themselves. What can the reward of virtue be except virtue itself? And what can be a worse punishment for ?vice than vice itself

In fact, reward and punishment are the natural consequence of our acts. One who puts his hands in fire gets burnt and one who acts in an evil manner and violates his duties receives the direct result of his deeds. You should not ask yourself, 'What is to be gained by goodness?' Be good, for goodness' sake. In the same way as day follows night and light follows darkness, true happiness, which consists of inner peace, will .greet us as a result of our virtuous conduct

One who does some good to others within the limits of his duties feels an unbounded joy within his soul. At such times it is as if he has risen over his ordinary surroundings to find himself on a brighter horizon beyond the confines of this life, and, as a result of .this sublime feeling, he attains happiness

Good intentions are fine, but one must make good deeds one's goal. We have a pleasant feeling when good thoughts cross our mind, but good acts, like

shining stars, brighten the horizons of others' souls. We can build the foundations of personal merit by the means of our actions, or can destroy these foundations to build the house of vice and corruption on their ruins. Yes, we are able to accomplish either .of these two alternatives, and, hence, our responsibility is truly great

There are two kinds of people. Those who undertake painstaking efforts for the comfort of others and those who cause hardship to others for the sake of their own comfort. The second kind of people, while they cause distress to others, are not themselves free from wretchedness. Yet the first kind obtains happiness in the course of working for others' welfare. The acts that are performed with the purpose of helping others have great and remarkable results, no matter how small they might (be.(١

There is no limit to benevolence and altruism, for the emotional resources of man are vast and inexhaustible. In fact, the more they are tapped the more abundantly do they flow. It is said that "the human intellect is finite but human passions are boundless: they can take everything under their angelic wings." Ultimately, .benevolent and altruistic assistance is a virtue that is not attained by everyone

Indifference to Others' Problems

Those who view every act of benevolence towards others as a cumbersome matter and regard people with ill will and resentment, are, in fact, those who have severed their spiritual links with the world in which they live, so much so that they are immersed within

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.Aveberry, John Lubbock Baron, Dar justojiz-e khushbakhti, pp. ٢٠١-٢٠٣ -١

themselves and are unconcerned with others and their problems. They imagine that no one else has an equal right to live, and they themselves are incapable of perceiving .their own stakes in the general good and welfare

Of course, this group of people is not devoid of human feeling and they do sense the suffering of others. But they are so imprisoned within the walls of egocentrism that there is no room in their scheme of things for altruistic sentiments. In other words, .they are incapable of transcending their individual egos to reach the collective self

Dr. Alexis Carrel, the well-known scholar, says

Everyone who directs himself wisely through life gradually undergoes profound changes. When the body and the soul act in accordance with their nature they become more resourceful. Conformity to the laws of survival, regeneration, and spiritual edification automatically reinforces all physical and psychic activities. This progress becomes especially noteworthy with the development of ethical merits and the growth of the moral, the aesthetic, and the religious sense, as well as personal .altruism and forbearance. At the same time, the intellect is also illuminated

When one understands that the goal of life is not mundane profit but life itself, one no longer devotes his attention exclusively to the external world, but views more closely his own life and that of those around him. He comes to know that he is dependent on others and that others are dependent upon him. This brings to light the artificial character of the views of

Jean Jacques Rousseau, the illogicality of the social contract, the danger of individualism, and the necessity of paying attention to others like oneself at all stages .of life

There is an open contradiction between individual self-seeking and the love of one's fellowmen, which is essential to social existence. The development and growth of the body takes place through the means of environmental agents and with the help of other individual Throughout its foetal existence, the human being is a kind of parasite dependent on the mother, and until the age of maturity is a parasite dependent on the family and society. Accordingly, he becomes accustomed to regarding the boons of his environment as a right. The ubiquity of individualism in all living creatures owes its .existence to this instinctive urge to egoism

On the other hand, extreme self-love makes the formation of a real society impossible. Hence, the love of one's fellowmen is as necessary as self-love, and there should be an equilibrium between 'I' and 'we" as two opposite tendencies. This equilibrium is a necessary condition of our success in life, in the same way as the precise movements of the hand depend on the functional opposition of the contracting and stretching muscles of the fingers. There are various ways in which individual 'I' become transformed into a collective 'We'.(۱)

Islam and Social Ties

The Islamic program of education has been framed with a view to expanding general social consciousness and broadening the people's intellectual horizons. That is because the wider their intellectual perspective and the

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۱ - Carrel, Alexis, Reflexions sur la conduite de la vie, Persian trans. Rah wa rasm-e zindagi, pp. ۱۴۵-۱۴۶.

higher their level of thinking, the easier it is for them to emerge from the darkness of selfishness and monopolistic motives. This program has been prepared in such a manner as to develop a collective ethos while simultaneously strengthening the individual spirit, so that individualism is reconciled with co-cooperativeness, and the individuals constituting society neither become hollow and devoid of personality nor self-centred and indifferent towards one another.

Social cohesion in an Islamic society is related to the bond between the individual and God. The people encourage one another to benevolence, piety, and worthy deeds and co-operate with one another in generating and sustaining an environment in which the young generation cultivates the love of virtue, benevolence, and goodness in the light of a pure faith. This helps mobilise all the constructive energies of the people toward general welfare and good, not toward corruption and vice. In this way, the goals and activities of the members of society are harmonised, their sense of co-operation awakened, and their individual and collective energies set to work for the service of mankind.

Since Islam essentially requires a co-operative and sympathetic society for the establishment of its prescribed social duties, and as benevolence and benefaction form the basis of its ethical code and program, it warns that anyone who is not concerned with the service of society is not a Muslim. The Holy Prophet (s) declared

One who wakes up without the feeling of concern for the affairs of Muslims is not a Muslim.(١)

When Islam rose over

١- Al-Kulayni, Usul al-Kafi, p. ٣٩٠.

pagan Arabia, it offered a teaching that encompassed all the affairs relating to society and the individual. It undertook the task of moral education and spiritual purification of a people among whom vindictiveness, mundane ambition, exploitation, and licentiousness were prevalent. It called them to brotherhood, benevolence, love, and friendship. It established such a basis for the positive personality of every individual that no divisive agent, such as hate and hostility, could separate them from one another. In this way, it brought into existence a society characterised with strength .and merit

In that society, in which faith, benevolence, and service were the criteria of personal worth, every individual felt so much involved in the destiny of others as if he were solely responsible for it. Intense attachment, forgiveness, self-denial, and self-sacrifice characterised their mutual relations. The Holy Qur'an describes this sublime :and luminous relationship in these words

And those (Helpers) who offered their dwellings and their hearts for the hospitality of the Emigrants, they love whomsoever has emigrated to them not finding in their breasts any need or miserliness for what they have been given, and preferring others (above themselves even though poverty be their portion. (۵۹:۹

The Qur'an describes the benevolent in these words

It is no piety that you turn you faces to the east and to the west. True piety is this: to believe in God, and the Last Day, the angels, the Scripture, and the prophets, to give of one's substance however cherished, to kinsmen and orphans, the needy, the ,traveller

(beggars, and to ransom the slave ... (۲:۱۷۷

On the other hand, at the sensitive moments when the well-to-do person offers generous help to the needy, a proper and subtle approach should be adopted in order to preserve the dignity of the needy person and to avoid undesirable psychological .consequences

Islam asks the wealthy to hold their hand low while giving so that the needy person's hand is above while he takes, in order that he does not feel humiliated and crushed. .They should also refrain from being proud and overbearing

Ali-may peace be upon him-said'

How nice it is for the rich to behave with humility with the poor for the sake of that which is with God! Yet nicer is the proud dignity of the poor in front of the rich due to (their trust in and reliance on God.(۱

The Visage of the Benevolent in Islam

Of the prominent signs of a Muslim are kindness and benevolence, a sincere kindness and generosity that are inspired by a special motive. It is a kindness that is done for the sake of God, even though the persons to whom it is done be strangers one does not know and with whom one has no acquaintance or kinship. His heart is full of love and affection for them and he does not expect any reward or gratitude. This conduct of his is motivated by a profound love that thrives in the depths of his heart and is replenished by a boundless, inexhaustible source: the bountiful and all- generous .mainspring of Divine love

Is

.Nahj al-balaghah, Hikam, No. ۴۰۶ -۱

it possible for any motive except faith and trust in the fair reward that God has prepared for the virtuous to induce man to perform acts of unalloyed and absolute ?benevolence free of every kind of personal interest

Hence true benevolence and kindness is something whose mainspring is an inner Divine motive and ideal, whose sole end is the attainment of God's good pleasure. Islam strives to create this sublime ideal and Divine motivation in the depths of the people's souls, and by this means it creates a profound and expansive consciousness that is commensurate with the expanse and depth of the universe and which cannot be contained in any dry and limited teaching. With this expansive and all-inclusive consciousness and vision and the genuine bond of feeling between one's soul and the spirit of creation, the work of a wise Maker, as well as with the awareness of God's infinite power, the artificial and self-made blinkers are removed from the eyes of .man's soul

This sublime human consciousness is born as a result of sincere servitude to God and the eternal bond and relation with Him. The perpetual worship of the Creator, the effort to seek His favour, and the wish to live in the shadow of His grace and beneficence bring man to such a point that he can attain to the station of God's vicegerency. He can come to possess a love that can remove every suffering and obstacle from the path of humanity and wage a struggle against

.every form of evil and corruption

With all its guiding precepts Islam nourishes this genuine feeling in such a fashion that it becomes amalgamated with the individual's nature. And when love becomes the mainspring of feeling and spreads its roots deep into the core of man's being, it gives rise to a yearning which, with voluntary zeal, is prepared to do benevolence and service to society. When that happens, enmity, malice, hostility and insolence cannot take roots in individuals but remain unstable, removable with a little of attention, for nothing else is better capable of eradicating these vices from the soul than this .invaluable cure-all

The profound concern of the Qur'an in regard to all the human beings in the world and the close attention paid to them has an extraordinary purifying effect on the soul. The consciousness of the firm and inalienable bond between oneself and the world, brings the order of one's being into harmony with the order of creation and makes man view .all beings, except a group of harmful creatures, with benevolence and love

Getting habituated to the feelings of benevolence, which reflect the greatness and sublime station of man's humanity, and a uniform feeling of tenderness for all living things, for the entire universe and its creatures, creates a healthy and balanced motivation in man that is indispensable for a fruitful life and removes darkness and .violence from his soul and purges it of impurities

It was the heavenly and refined consciousness of the Noble Prophet of Islam that

made him say concerning his vicious kinsmen who had adopted a hostile and inhuman :conduct towards him

".O God, be merciful and forgiving to my people, for they are ignorant"

The inexhaustible love and benevolence of the Prophet of Islam (s) not only extended to all human beings, in practice it taught Muslims the principles of kindness and benevolence on a very extensive level. One day the Prophet (s) told this story to a group of his companions. A man passing through a scorching desert was overwhelmed with thirst. Finding a well, he descended into it and quenched his thirst with water. On coming out he saw a dog that had lost all its strength due to thirst and in agony was rubbing its nose on the ground. The man saw that the poor animal was suffering as it could not find water. He felt pity and compassion for it and decided to give it some water. Thereupon, he again descended into the well and filling his shoes with water placed them in front of the dog which was about to perish out of thirst. God .Almighty forgave that man as a reward for this act of kindness

The Companions asked the Prophet (S): "Can we too seek God's reward by being kind to animals?" The Prophet (S) replied: "Yes. You will be rewarded for service to every ".living thing

Every act must be judged by its motives and the source of any action should not be divorced from its consequences, exactly like

.a disease which is treated by taking into consideration its cause

The Visage of Benevolence in the West

If today's developed nations allocate an amount of their yearly budget and a fraction of their economic resources for the development of backward and underdeveloped nations, their action, in the first place, is not inspired by pure humanitarian motives or by sheer benevolence. Rather, it is because if the purchasing power of underdeveloped nations collapses and they are unable to consume the industrial products of the industrialised countries, their economies will suffer due to a decline in foreign trade. Hence maintenance of a relative economic equilibrium between the two .sides is the basic motive behind this kind of aid

Many individual acts of benevolence, too, serve as a means of satisfying selfish needs and there is no trace of sincerity in them; rather, mostly they serve as a bridge for attaining personal objectives. However, human merit as a source of benevolence has its sole place in man's character and, therefore, while making a judgement concerning the value of an act, it is not proper to consider solely the consequences. We should not look for an arithmetical equation for determining the value of a good .act by equating it with its results. Arithmetics alone cannot resolve ethical issues

:Alexis Carrel paints the visage of benevolence in the West in the following description

The motive behind our actions is either personal gain-more than anything else, financial advantage-or the satisfaction of our exhibitionist tendencies, the desire for title, recognition, and social status. This quest for personal

gain often conceals itself under the garb of hypocrisy and hides behind the mask of philanthropy. One can observe such instances of treachery in military circles, ... universities, offices and courts

The very meaning of honour has been distorted. Those who dedicate themselves to a great purpose or strive in an unassuming manner appear to be crazy and contemptible. The signs of self-seeking effort can be seen everywhere-in the lady who engages in charitable undertakings without being concerned with helping the destitute in the depth of her heart, but who wishes either to become the leader of some institution or earn the Legion of Honour, or to make a profit by opening a lucrative venture; in the famous physician who recommends a medicine to his pupils and patients because he has been secretly bribed by its manufacturer; in the scholar whose efforts are not for the sake of advancement of knowledge, but for the hope of occupying an academic chair and the financial advantages associated with it; in the medical scientists who do not observe any code of morality either in conducting tests on their patients or in their medical care; in the students who tempt the college office clerk in order to obtain question papers before the examinations; in the pupil who sells the vitaminized sweets gifted by some charitable institution in the black market. Often the ugly and brutal face of avarice hides under the mask of altruism, scholarship, and philanthropy. We are fond of money, for money procures

everything and gives us power before everything else. Almost everyone can be bought, either with money or with things that wealth can provide and the wealthy can (offer as a temptation. Ultimately money helps us satisfy our base lusts.(۱

The following story represents an example of the conduct and the way of thinking of those who were brought up under the influence of Islam's teachings. The story helps .us understand the real character of the Islamic view of benevolence and charity

One day a man came to the Noble Messenger (s) and declared that he was hungry and tired. The Prophet immediately sent someone to his house to fetch food for the man. He was told with regret by the Prophet's wife that there was nothing except water in the house. Disappointed that he could not feed the man, the Prophet turned to his Companions and asked them: "Can anyone of you accept him as a guest?" Thereupon, one of the men belonging to the Ansar extended his hospitality to the man. When he reached home he found that there was enough food only for the children. He told his wife to make arrangements to provide food for the guest. At the time of dinner, he put the lamp out so that the guest should think that he too was !eating the dinner with him

:The great Prophet of Islam said

It is obligatory on every Muslim to do an act of charity every day" Someone said to" him, "But who can afford to

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.Carrel, op. cit pp. ۱۵-۱۶ -۱

give charity every day?" The Prophet (S) replied: "If you remove troublesome stones (and obstacles from the public way that is also considered an act of charity."(۱)

It should be noted that the Prophet (s) mentioned lifting of stones from the road used by Muslims as a charitable and godly action because that is the least that a man without any means can accomplish. That is, someone whose status does not allow him to lift stones from highways should accomplish bigger tasks. Those who have plenteous means of all kinds must perform acts of benevolence and charity in proportion to their capacity, because there must be a proportionate relationship .between an individual's means and his works

Once, one of my friends who was an influential social worker said to me: "My daily program every morning after leaving home and before taking up my routine work is to consider it my duty to perform some act of altruism though it may involve guiding someone who has sought my counsel regarding his work. This is part of my fixed ".program in life

Truly, if all Muslims and concerned human beings should decide to put into action the program suggested by the Holy Prophet of Islam and should everyone perform an act of charity in proportion to his means and in accordance with his profession, the wheels of social life would rotate more smoothly and many of the people's problems .and difficulties would be solved in this way

The Criterion of Human Worth Before God

When the Prophet of Islam (s) was asked as

.Al-Majlisi, Bihar al-anwar, vol. xv, p. ۱۳۱ -۱

:to who was the dearest of human beings to God, he replied

'.It is someone who is of greatest benefit to the people

The Messenger of God (s) also said

If someone hears a person calling Muslims for help and does not respond positively to his call and request for help and does not assist him, he is not a Muslim.(۱)

Once, Safwan was present at a gathering with al-'Imam al-Sadiq ('a). Suddenly a person who was visibly worried entered the room. When he spoke and described his difficulty, it became evident that it was a financial problem that he had failed to solve. The Imam ordered Safwan to go immediately and to do something to solve the difficulty of his brother in faith. Safwan got up and left and returned into the Imam's presence after solving that man's problem. The Imam asked him about the matter ".and Safwan replied, "God has set right the matter

The Imam said to him, "You should know that the solution of this apparently small difficulty for which you spent a little time of yours is of greater value than your performing circumambulation of the Ka'bah non- stop for a full week." Then he narrated the following incident. Once a man came to al-Imam al-Hasan ('a) with some difficulty and asked him to help him out. Al-Imam al-Hasan ('a) immediately got ready and went out with him. On the way, they came across al-Husayn ibn 'Ali ('a) who was engaged in prayer. Al-Imam al-Hasan ('a) asked the man why

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.Ibid, vol ii p. ۱۶۴ -۱

he had not approached al-Husayn ibn 'Ali ('a) and asked his assistance. The man answered that at first he had wanted to approach him but had given up the idea on .hearing that al-Husayn was in the state of i'tikaf

Al-Imam al-Hasan ('a) said to him: "Had he received the opportunity to assist you it (would have been dearer to him than a month's i'tikaf."(١

Boundless Charity and Love

The more expansive and wider the scope of human feeling, the greater the number of people that it embraces. Such an expansive love and benevolence cannot find room in the breasts of people who have narrow and straitened hearts. Their benevolence is not universal so as to embrace people belonging to every group and class. Such a .benevolence and compassion is not close to Divine mercy

A man said in the presence of al-Husayn ibn 'Ali:) "Goodness is wasted when done to) :those who are not worthy of it." The Imam said to him

That is not true; for benevolence is like a torrential rain which comes down" (everywhere and equally waters orchards as well as wastelands."(٢

Al-Imam al-Sajjad ('a) exhorted al-Imam al-Baqir ('a), his son, not to hold back his kindness and benevolence from anyone and to carry out this moral and human duty :to the extent of his capacity in respect of all human beings

My son, don't hold back your kindness from anyone who seeks your charity and benevolence; for even if he were not worthy of that kindness you would prove to be worthy of

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Ibid, vol. ii P- ١٩۴ -١

.Al-Harrani, Tuhaf al uqul, p. ٢۴۵ -٢

(it by responding positively to his request. (١

Al-Husayn ibn 'Ali, the master of world's freemen-may peace be upon him-in a profound and eloquent sermon, calls men to benevolence. The following is a free paraphrase of his speech.

O people, adopt the virtues of benevolence and chivalry and hearken to solve the difficulties of the destitute, for benevolence is a greatly profitable quality. O people, seek salvation and felicity by the means of service to God's creatures. You, who have the capacity to alleviate the pains of those who suffer, should not let others speak ill of you on account of your negligence in rendering benign service. If you give a helping hand to the weak and the disabled and they do not thank you for your kindness, do not be disappointed and dispirited in your altruism, because God will give you a great reward and grant you His inexhaustible favours and bounties. In fact, it is one of His great favours that God has given you the capacity to satisfy the wants of the needy.

It does not behove you to be greedy and avaricious. For, should you acquire all the bounties of God and yet be unwilling to help the deprived and bring relief to the suffering, God shall change the favours that He has granted you into suffering and pain. He will make you face humiliation and let you taste the afflictions of the deprived and the suffering.

How delightful it is to bring solace and consolation to a broken heart

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١- Al-Kulayni, op. cit, p. ١٥٣.

or offer relief to some destitute! Should you be worthy and honourable, you will achieve a good name amongst the people, and they will look upon you with gratitude and affection instead of resentment and rancour when you pass by them. Perhaps many of those who are needy today will be able to reward you for your kindness in .their better days

Were benevolence to take the form of a human being and were you to behold his beautiful and luminous visage, you would see him as a most handsome and charming youth whose sight gladdens your heart. And were it possible for vice and misconduct to appear before you in a human form, you would undoubtedly be so repelled by the sight of his ugly and hateful countenance that you would close your eyes in horror and .revulsion

O people, be generous and munificent in order to enjoy honour and dignity, for one .who is parsimonious and stingy shall be petty and contemptible

The most generous of men is he who gives to someone in need who cannot return his kindness and the most forgiving of them is one who forgives despite possessing the power to retaliate. The noblest of kinsmen is he who does not neglect to be benevolent and caring in regard to his relatives, though they should not observe the .demands of familial ties with him

If you were so noble and forbearing, you would be like a tree that bears plenteous fruits, a tree whose roots are nourished by

goodness and blessing. The branches of felicity and good fortune would spread over you and others will benefit from their shadow. Its sweet and pleasant fruits will free you of all bitterness.

Every good man should make haste in performing good works and service to God's creatures. He will receive such a reward and blessing for it in the future as he had never expected. Should he, for the sake of God's good pleasure, offer a helping hand to someone in need the generous and magnanimous Lord will assist him on the day of his need and save him from facing hardships.

O people, God shall take away the sorrow and darkness of the world and the hereafter from the heart of every one of you who brings relief to a suffering soul.

(He will reward the good-doers for their good-doing, for God loves the good-doers.(١)

Good doing and charity are not confined to monetary help, or to providing relief from physical suffering and hardship. Rather, spiritual assistance, moral guidance and correction of moral conduct and qualities have a higher and greater value than material charity.

Hence if one were to assist those who are lost and help them extricate themselves from the clutches of corruption and misguidance and enter the luminous environs of the truth, he would be doing the greatest favour to them. From the viewpoint of Islam, the most sublime and the most valuable act of charity and benevolence is to help the deviant and deliver those bogged down in the mire

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١- Al-Irbili, Kashf al-ghummah, vol. ii, p. ٢٠۴.

.of corruption and wretchedness

:(The sublime leader of Islam (s) said to 'Ali ('a

If God were to guide a single person through you, that is better for you than (everything under the sun.(١)

Chapter ٧: Man's Spiritual Needs

point

In the same way as man has physical needs in life which he strives and struggles to fulfil, the soul too has needs that must be satisfied. These spiritual needs and urges .have been placed by the hands of creation in the depths of his soul

The soul craves for appreciation and recognition, and it is for the sake of satisfaction of this inner urge that everyone so eagerly seeks social approval for his acts and conduct and is keen to receive the appreciation that he deserves. This helps reaffirm .his personality and fulfils his aspirations and expectations

Since self-love is inherent in man, he is in passionate love with his own creative achievements and intellectual and artistic accomplishments. Hence encouragement and appreciation play a most basic role in the motivation of individuals, and this is one of the most essential facts of social life. Appreciation, while being the simplest and cheapest kind of medicine, is so marvellously effective that it can infuse new life into a .torpid and impoverished society and open before it new vistas of life

On the contrary, parsimony in showing appreciation and absence of encouragement are big obstacles in the way of society's progress and growth. They prevent latent capacities and talents from blossoming by causing lethargy, apathy and isolationism, which take the place of

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.Shaykh 'Abbas al-Qummi, Safinat al-Bihar vol. ii, p. ٧٠٠ -١

.creativity and dynamism

Young people who have mentally and emotionally entered a critical phase of life and reached the threshold of independent life need, more than anything else, appreciation and encouragement to actively advance in life and to apply greater .effort

:Bertrand Russell says

Praise should not be given for anything that should be a matter of course. I should give it for a new development of courage or skill, and for an act of unselfishness as regards possessions, if achieved after a moral effort. All through education any usually good piece of work should be praised. To be praised for a difficult achievement is one of the most delightful experiences in youth, and the desire for this pleasure is quite proper as an added incentive, though it should not be the main motive. The main motive should always be an interest in the matter itself, whatever ... the matter may happen to be

All moral instruction must be immediate and concrete; it must arise out of a situation which has grown up naturally, and must not go beyond what ought to be done in this particular instance. The child himself will apply the moral in other similar cases. It is much easier to grasp a concrete instance and apply analogous considerations to an analogous instance than to apprehend a general rule and proceed deductively. Do not say, in a general way, 'Be brave, be kind,' but urge him to some particular piece of ';daring, and then say, 'Bravo, you were a brave boy

get him to let his little sister play with his mechanical engine, and when he sees her beaming with delight say, 'That's right, you were a kind boy.' The same principle applies in dealing with cruelty: look out for its faint beginnings and prevent them from developing.(۱)

It is the biggest blow to the creative capacities of the young to show indifference to their accomplishments, to deprive them of recognition, and to set no store by their personality. Because when they feel that people think nothing of their work and the fruits of their effort are of no account to them and deemed worthless, they become greatly upset. Their growing capacities and talents lose their vigour and languish. Their sense of confidence and future hope die within their hearts. As their psychological need of security remains unsatisfied they become prone to psychic illness. That is because when an urge remains unsatisfied, it is repressed and becomes buried in the unconscious, giving rise to undesirable complexes that vex the mind.

Aside from this, when persons possessing knowledge and skill discover that the results of their labour and work cannot help them obtain recognition, their feelings of disappointment may radically alter the course of their thought and conduct. As a result, they may take recourse to improper methods in order to satisfy their psychological need. Instead of seeking spiritual excellence and human merit, they may resort to fraud, deceit, and other illegitimate means in order to obtain some kind of recognition in life. This

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۱- Bertrand Russell, On Education (London: Unwin Books, ۱۹۶۶), pp. ۹۵-۹۶.

.is a fact which has been established by psychological findings

The Profound Effect of Appreciation and Recognition

A single laudatory remark can produce a profound effect on one's spirit and bring about a spiritual revolution that could impel one to devote an entire lifetime to intense effort and endeavour for achievement and success. There are many who consider their success and achievement as owing to the appreciation shown by their elders and their generous compliments. Were it not for their appreciation, they could not .have climbed the ladder of success

Amongst progressive nations of the world a special importance is given to recognition of outstanding individuals, and this is done in various ways. In such environs the light of genius and talent is never extinguished and suitable conditions are maintained for the development of talent and the emergence of dormant capacities, because .learning and effort receive the recognition they deserve

But, regrettably, many of our press media, whose duty is to educate and guide the people and whose goal should be to enlighten minds and raise the general level of the people's knowledge and their awareness of real problems of life, mostly promote matters which lead to the depression of the general mental level. They divert the people's attention towards insignificant things and spread moral mediocrity and decadence, whereas there is no trace in them of any effort to promote real values and to encourage men of science and merit. A contemporary Iranian writer criticises :this significant failing of our society in these words

Motivation–real, not one marred by publicity–is one

of the biggest of our psychological and social needs. Nowadays our businessmen and marketing experts have created diverse and perplexing forms of false kinds of motivation. If some gentleman or lady taking part in a quiz competition, for instance, is able to name the fifth mistress of Louis XVI, they send him or her by air on a month's trip to Europe. Or if one of the contestants in a certain competition is able to describe better than others the advantages of using a certain head shampoo, he receives a big bundle of cosmetics as a gift. But we have not yet instituted an award to .show recognition to our best creative minds of the year

During youth, which is the most important phase of life in respect of the foundations of one's moral character, one is capable of showing appreciation and admiration for outstanding work or some remarkable service rendered by someone. But the more one advances in life, the lesser does anything attract one's attention and admiration. That is why it is essential to reinforce the spirit of appreciation and gratitude in persons in their formative years and to awaken their feelings of admiration for .outstanding personalities

This program is quite effective in maintaining psychological balance and equilibrium in the youth because of their natural propensity for adopting some kind of model. Of necessity, the young person selects certain personalities as his models, and if during that stage his attention is not turned towards men of higher character, and should

he fail to develop an admiration for their accomplishments and deeds, he may choose perverse characters as his models and try to emulate them. It is obvious what bad and undesirable effects that would have on the life of the youth. Those who have a refined temperament, a kind heart, and an open mind commend and applaud every good deed and positive action that they come across. The sublime perspicacity and high-mindedness of great men has an extraordinary radiance that invigorates others and gives them power and warmth. Contact with higher morals raises one's level of thinking and relieves one of egoism, which is the greatest obstacle in the way of moral improvement and development. Those who have come under the influence of the spirit of great men and have been nourished by their thoughts, will be advantageously equipped to ascend to the peaks of human sublimity. But there are some others who staunchly grudge mentioning even the merits of their closest friends. They are never willing to say a word concerning their worthy and meritorious qualities or to pay a compliment appreciating their valuable services and accomplishments. Most of the time they adopt an indifferent attitude.

There are some base characters that lack the higher human virtues and are capable of acquiring every undesirable quality. They deprecate and view with contempt everything that is praiseworthy and admirable, and express their displeasure and disapproval of everything. The achievements and successes of others are painful and distressing to them. Not only

they cannot bear hearing any word of praise concerning their successful colleagues, but are delighted by their problems and hardships, which are the biggest means of .their satisfaction

When they feel that their colleagues are getting ahead of them, the flames of anger leap up in the furnace of their hearts. Their narrow-mindedness and envy may even lead them to resort to unseemly and hostile conduct against their fellows and induce .them to lie in wait for an opportunity to deliver an unmanly blow to their rivals

This kind of narrow-mindedness and decadence, which is untouched by wholesome :morals, is well reflected in the following couplet

,Now that Providence has looked with favour upon my rival and granted him gifts

?Haven't I the right to view him with indignation and regard him with disdain

The wise take lesson from the conduct of the foolish and refrain from their mistakes. The foolish, however, are not willing to follow the conduct of the wise and draw lesson .from their morals and human merits

Cynicism and Principled Criticism

Finding fault with people and negating their personality are one of the greatest defects of our society and these characteristics are prevalent among all its various classes. Anyone who makes an innovative move or starts something new immediately attracts criticism and disapprobation from every quarter and group, though the critics should lack all competence to give an opinion and judgement concerning the matter. Without anyone making a study of the new venture or inquiring into its character, the innovator is assailed by a flood of

:criticism from every side. Dale Carnegie writes

The late Johan Wanamaker confessed: I learned thirty years ago that it is foolish to scold. I have enough trouble overcoming my own limitations without fretting over the (fact that God has not seen fit to distribute evenly the gift of intelligence.(١

Principled and proper criticism is undoubtedly one of the beneficial methods of reforming society. But what is unfortunate is that most criticism is made without due consideration and study. This is itself an injustice and a violation of others' rights which blocks the way of change and innovation, as this vice of society may discourage .even the strongest of individuals in his efforts and make him feel despondent

According to psychologists, criticism of others and finding fault with them often reflect the critic's own shortcomings and inadequacies which he unconsciously projects on to :others. In this regard they say

In general, criticism and censure of others' actions and lapses mostly derive from our own shortcomings of which we are not aware. We observe these inadequacies in others because unconsciously we sense their presence in ourselves. The wise and positive person does not spend his time criticising and blaming others, for he is always engaged in doing something positive and beneficial. The critics rarely belong to the class of creative and productive individuals. In fact, the art critics in their criticism of others' art implicitly criticise their own work. The experts who always show the .'practical way' are mostly theoreticians who have faced practical defeat

Undeserved and

Dale Carnegie, How to Win Friends (New York: Simon and Schuster Inc., ١٩٣٧), p.٢٧ -١

unreasonable criticism mostly results in violation of rights and destroys the permanent value of everything. A source of intense dissatisfaction is traceable in persons who make unjust and unjustified judgements of whose unfairness they are themselves unconscious. The inner dissatisfaction is transferred from inside such a person to the outside and spoils the worth of everything. We observe such a kind of reaction especially in persons whose life has been spent in despair and defeat and to whom the whole universe appears as futile and counterfeit. Their criticism of things and other persons derives from personal dissatisfaction. They dislike today what they used to like until yesterday, without realising that this hatred is not related to external reality but springs from their own spirit. Pessimism and hostility are in fact due to the drying up of the mainsprings of love within man.(۱)

Even in cases where the good act is part of someone's duty, it must be appreciated and commended and the dutiful person must be thanked and his work appreciated. That makes him perform his duty with greater dedication and carry out his responsibilities with further zeal, constancy and conviction.

Several years ago I was in one of the famous cities of Iran. One day there was a failure of electric power due to some technical fault in our area. I phoned the manager of the electric company and requested him to take steps for removing the fault. After a relatively long interval, electricity was restored to the network. I again

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۱ - Strecker, Wilkerforce Appel, Rawanshenasi baraye hameh, trans. Mushfiq Hamadani, pp. ۲۵۷-۲۵۹.

contacted the manager to thank him and appreciate his action. At first when he spoke there were visible signs of annoyance and reticence in his voice, but after that he heard me thank him he was so affected that his voice suddenly became animated quite perceptibly. With a great liveliness mixed with surprise he asked me, "Who are you? This is the first time since I have been in charge of the company that someone has appreciated my work!" In reply I told him, "Unfortunately, or fortunately, I do not belong to this town. I wanted to appreciate you for having done your duty." Then he .expressed his wish to have a closer personal contact

After that time whenever electricity failed as a result of some fault in the decrepit network of the area, as soon as I would inform him he would eagerly and heartily take immediate steps to remove the fault, which would be done in a short time. On making an inquiry I came to know that this person had been the company's top man for several years and during this long period of time not even once had he received any .note of thanks or appreciation for his efforts

Flattery is Reprehensible

It should be remembered that encouragement and appreciation, with all their beneficial and revolutionary results, have certain reasonable and logical limits beyond which they must not go. For, in the same way as indifference to the positive and constructive actions of individuals is an obstacle to the growth of

talents and capacities, exaggerated praise and admiration, too, which amount to flattery and sycophancy, are harmful and reprehensible, for they involve a kind of .departure from reality

:Dale Carnegie writes

Of course, flattery seldom works with discerning people. It is shallow, selfish, and ... insincere. It ought to fail and it usually does

In the long run, flattery will do you more harm than good. Flattery is counterfeit, and like counterfeit money, it will eventually get you into trouble if you try to pass it. The difference between appreciation and flattery? What is simpler? One is sincere and the other insincere. One comes from the heart out; the other from the teeth out. One is unselfish; the other selfish. One is universally admired; the other is universally condemned. I recently saw a bust of General Obregon in the Chapultepec Palace in Mexico City. Below the bust are carved these wise words from General Obregon's philosophy: "Don't be afraid of the enemies who attack you. Be afraid of the friends ".who flatter you

No! No! No! I am not suggesting flattery! Far from it. I'm talking about a new way of life ...

When we are not engaged in thinking about some definite problem, we usually spend about ٩٥ percent of our time thinking about ourselves. Now, if we stop thinking about ourselves for a while and begin to think of the other man's good points, we won't have to resort to flattery so cheap and false that it can be spotted almost before it is

out of the mouth. Emerson said: "Every man I met is my superior In some way. In that, I learn of him." If that was true of Emerson, isn't it likely to be a thousand times more true of you and me? Let's cease thinking of our accomplishments, our wants. Let's try to figure out the other man's good points. Then forget flattery. Give honest, sincere appreciation.(۱)

When 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz, who in sharp contrast to other Umayyad caliphs was a man of some human merits, came to power and different classes of people thronged to welcome him to the throne, a man named Khalid ibn 'Abd Allah, an eminent Arab figure who was representing a group, stood up to address the general audience. He said:

O caliph and master of Muslims! For some people their honour relates to the position to which they rise in life. Their pride and prestige derive from their kingly and caliphal station. But you are the pride of the caliphate and the throne. The throne and crown are proud of you and owe their majesty and glory to your worthy self. In fact, the verse of the Arab poet befits you when he said:

If the pearl gives charm to the beautiful face and heightens its beauty, It is thy beautiful face that gives the pearl its charm. It adorns thee not, but is adorned by thy beauty!

Abd Allah spoke in this vein eulogising the caliph with glittering verses and phrases.' But the caliph was annoyed

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۱- Carnegie, How to Win Friends, Persian trans. p. ۴۲.

by this flattery and sycophancy. Suddenly he interrupted 'Abd Allah's panegyric and asked him to take his seat. Then, turning to the audience he remarked: "Your ".companion has as much of an eloquent tongue as you may wish instead of wisdom

Flattery and sycophancy are other conspicuous defects of our present society and to a frightening extent they have penetrated many aspects of our social life. One comes across few people who express appreciation and gratitude solely for the sake of encouraging others and showing recognition for their work and with no purpose .except to facilitate their progress

:An Iranian writer and social figure writes

Little by little it has become an established law for me that everyone who comes to see me and express his admiration for my writings and works has some immediate request to make. Either he wants me to make a certain recommendation for him, or some need has prompted him to seek information through me, or he expects some other kind of help. Until now no one has paid me a visit solely for the purpose of .encouraging me in my work

:Then he adds

Truly, it is a matter of regret that whereas most well-known writers, poets and public speakers in advanced countries daily receive scores of letters from people who have no purpose in view except to express their sincere feelings of genuine appreciation and gratitude arising from admiration for their works, in Iran rarely does a writer or orator receive any appreciation that is devoid of some

.kind of self-interest

Islam's Plan for the Propagation of Moral Virtues

One of the precious teachings of Islam is that Muslims should be grateful for the boundless bounties of God. In reality, the feeling of gratitude arises from an inner .freedom, which is something mysteriously united with the human essence

Emotional motivation and encouragement is a useful means for the propagation of human virtues in society. Should the people reward good- doers and punish those guilty of misconduct by means of their appropriate reactions, society would move steadily towards health and growth. For when the feelings of reprobation for offenders and admiration and appreciation for the pious and virtuous are alive amongst the people, society naturally inclines towards piety and human merit and the ideals of moral rectitude and virtue come to prevail. The moral worth of everyone .becomes distinct and the qualities of the pure and the polluted become distinguished

Ali-may peace be upon him-in his historic directive addressed to Malik al-Ashtar,' :says

O Malik:) The good and the wicked must not be equal in your eyes, for otherwise it) would discourage the good from good-doing and encourage the wicked in their misconduct. Treat them in accordance with the kind of conduct he has chosen for (himself.(١)

For the rare kind of persons whose personality has reached the most sublime heights of development, the very satisfaction and inner peace that they derive from carrying out their duties and responsibilities is their reward and motivating agent. But reaching such an ideal level of morality is possible for only a numbered few. Most people

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١- Nahj al-balaghah, "Kutub," no. ٥٣ addressed to Malik al-Ashtar.

have not attained such a spiritual development so as not to stand in need of praise and appreciation. Hence the significance of the effect of appreciation should not be ignored at any time. Shachter, the well-known psychologist, says:

If it be necessary to find fault with someone and to criticise his conduct, it is essential first to mention one of his good points and commend him for it, so that his need for attention and appreciation is fulfilled. If you censure him after that it would not be so bitter and unpleasant; rather, he might accept your advice, and even reproof, eagerly and gratefully.

If the boss is dissatisfied with a letter written by his secretary, it would be better to tell him, "The one you had written the other day was quite clear and lucid. But this one is somewhat vague. Please look it over again and change it if necessary." Certainly the secretary will not feel dejected by this remark but would feel grateful for the chiefs attention and appreciation. He will perform his work with greater effort and attention. When you observe a bearer at a restaurant moving about swiftly and serving food, do not scold him and create ill feeling if there is some delay in bringing your food. Show appreciation for his effort and compliment him for his skill and agility. Rest assured that he will do his work with greater zeal and, by the way, bring your food as soon as he can. Irrespective of age

and status, everyone likes his work to be appreciated by people. Even the old school teacher, after years of giving lessons and receiving recognition for his work, feels elated on hearing his little pupil say, "Sir, we have benefited greatly from your lesson ".today

Respect others' need for appreciation and care so that the give and take of life goes on smoothly and happily. Don't lose any opportunity of showing appreciation for others and complimenting them for their good work so that others too may honour (your need for appreciation and attention.(۱

We should realise that in the same way as persons possess certain positive and outstanding qualities, they may also have some shortcomings and defects. We ourselves are no exception to this rule. Therefore, instead of always pointing out others' weak points, we must keep in view their merits and positive qualities. 'Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, may peace by upon him, draws our attention to this point with an interesting metaphor. He says

Be like the honeybee, which always drinks the purest of things (i.e. the nectar) and (yields the purest of things and does not break any bough that it alights upon.(۲

When one receives the affection and benevolence of one's friends and observes them making effort to fulfil one's wishes with utmost sincerity and eagerness and striving lovingly to solve one's difficulties, then morality and humanity dictate that one should thank them for their generosity and kindness, win their pure hearts, and give them one's pure love in

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۱- Shachter, Rushd-e shakhsiyyat, pp. ۴۵-۴۶.

۲- Al-Amidi, Ghurar al-hikam wa durar al-kalim, p. ۵۶۹.

.order to be worthy of their unmingled affection

Gratitude may express itself in an act of kindness free from any kind of ostentation. :Kronin writes

My son, who was studying medicine, narrated that once a patient was admitted into the hospital. A blood transfusion was necessary for his treatment and recovery. On recovering from his illness, he began to inquire about the identity of the person who had given blood for his treatment. He was told that the names of the blood donors were not disclosed. After several weeks, the same person turned up at the hospital to donate his blood. He did that repeatedly without any ostensible motive. When one of the surgeons asked him about it, he answered in a very simple manner: Some unknown person donated his blood for me. This way I want to thank him for it.(۱)

It would be far from manliness not to give benevolence and kindness even the most elementary kind of recognition, which is verbal appreciation and thanks. It is also a .kind of injustice

The Great Harms of Ingratitude

There are some people who not only do not express any gratefulness-either in words or in deed-no matter how much help or kindness they may receive, but remain dissatisfied, as if it were the responsibility of others to do them service and to show kindness, whereas their own duty were to be ungratefully indifferent to the rights of others! The reader may have observed this type of persons around him. Their conduct does not conform to any rational, human, or

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۱- Danistaniha-ye jahan-e 'ilm, p. ۱۵۹.

logical norm. 'Ali-may peace be upon him-puts this group of ungrateful persons in the :ranks of animals. He says

(One who does not appreciate a favour and kindness is no more than an animal.(١

Even when someone does not succeed in getting one's work done, one must appreciate his sincerity and disinterested motives when one feels that he has .sincerely sought to help one

Ali-may peace be upon him-said'

One who does not appreciate the good, unmingled, and sincere intentions of his friend .will also not appreciate his services and acts of kindness

:The Eleventh Imam said

The best of your friends are those who forget your inadequacies but never forget .your kindness

The spirit of ungratefulness brings irremediable harm, for when one denies gratitude and appreciation to others for their service and kindness despite being aware of their significance and the trouble and effort undertaken by them, they would not be .disposed to help him out in a hardship next time

Ali-may peace be upon him-refers to this kind of loss and deprivation in the following' saying

One who does not thank for a favour will not find anything except deprivation and (disappointment.(٢

In the directive to Malik al-Ashtar he points out the significance and benefits of :appreciation

O Malik) Attention to major matters should not make you neglect minor and less) important ones, for the people benefit from your trivial services and acts of kindness ...in their own right, while they cannot do without your major services

Hence pay thorough attention to the demands and needs of the people. Pay

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۱- Al-Amidi, op. cit., p. ۶۷۲.

۲- Ibid., p. ۷۰۲.

compliments to those who take pains and do worthy work. For the tribute paid to them for their work gives enthusiasm to the brave and serves as a constant source of their motivation. This practice also helps motivate conservative and timid persons and draws them to the field of battle.(١)

We may also pay attention to the experiences that have been acquired in this field:

If parents and children show greater appreciation and regard for each other, you will see that the crowds at psychiatric clinics of patients suffering from various complexes would be very much diminished. Every now and then one needs to be animated by the warmth of others' approval and compliments. Otherwise one's mental health and self-respect would be endangered. If one does not hear a word of thanks in life for one's efforts, life would be very difficult. At times I myself feel like the old woman who had served the cowboys for twenty years waiting for a word of appreciation. One day they told her that she was mad. In reply she told them, Until now I haven't heard anything from you that might show that you can distinguish between one who is mad and one who isn't.

Dr. Whyle , who had a long experience in the treatment of problematic children, one day told me about the case of a child who suffered from an interesting illness. From this case he had come to the conclusion that at times praise and appreciation had to be ministered like

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١ - Nahj al-balaghah, trans. Fayd, al-Islam, p. ٩٩٧, "Kutub," no. ٥٣ addressed to Malik al-Ashtar.

a physician's prescription. The matter related to male twins, one of whom was quite brilliant in respect of intelligence while the other appeared to be retarded. Their father had approached me to find out the cause behind it," he said. When I had won the confidence of the retarded child, he told me something that children usually say in such cases. He asked me why others did not like him as much as they did his brother. They would smile whenever his brother did something whereas they frowned when he himself did something exactly similar. 'I can do nothing as well as my brother,' he ".said

Dr. Whyle continued: "I kept the two brothers as apart as I could and put them in different classes at the school. I asked his parents not to attempt to motivate the retarded child by drawing comparisons between the two sons, telling them to make a conscious effort to compliment this child for his performance even if it were ".something trifling. Soon the child became such as to stand on his own feet

One of my wealthy acquaintances who prided himself on not having tipped a single penny for any service was faced with a tragedy on the first day of the new year. His chief accountant committed suicide. The books and the accounts were in perfect order. The man who had killed himself, a meek and respectable fellow, had remained a bachelor. All that he had left for a clue was a note addressed

to his rich employer. "Never during all these thirty years did I hear a word of encouragement. Exhausted and broken-hearted, I am fed up with my life," it read.(1)

The spirit of encouragement and appreciation arises from personal maturity, self-reliance and a healthy spiritual state, whereas flattery is a sign of low self-respect, baseness, fear, and a decadent personality. Undeserved praise of others is the practice of those who want to compensate for their inadequacies by this means, or are cunningly after their own interests. The compliments paid by self-seeking persons are devoid of any kind of worth, because they are not based on good faith or conviction but are aimed with a particular motive. These self-seeking sycophants are like skilled hunters who set traps of flattery to catch the passing prey.

Voltaire says: "Those who exercise their rhetorical skills have often impious intentions in their hearts."

'Ali-may peace be upon him-said:

A compliment that exceeds a person's merit is flattery; if lesser than the merit, it is either due to incapacity or envy.(2)

The Noble Messenger-may peace and God's blessings be upon him and his Household-said:

Sycophancy is not in a believer's character.(3)

Undue praise and compliments give rise to pride, and if the proud person be a man of influence and power, he will not find it easy to listen to sincere advice and exhortations or heed truth and reality.

In the aforementioned directive, 'Ali-may peace be upon him-writes to Malik al-Ashtar:

Make the people get accustomed to refraining from flattering you and from praising you

۱- Albert Schweitzer, Kelidha-ye khushbakhti, trans. Ahmad Aram, Tehran: Shirkat-e Sahami-ye Intishar, Khurdad ۱۳۴۷ H. Sh., pp. ۳۳۵, ۳۳۶, ۳۳۷.

۲- Al-Qummi, Safinat al-Bihar, vol. ۲, p. ۵۲۸.

۳- Nahj al-balaghah p. ۵۰۹.

unduly for something you haven't done, for excessive flattery brings about self-conceit and leads to pride and haughtiness.(1)

Hence if you pay someone a tribute exceeding what he merits and extol him beyond his real worth, you will not only add nothing to his personality but will harm your own personal dignity by your flattery and sycophancy. And if you commend someone with a compliment that falls short of his merit, that is an indication of your weak and unbalanced spirit or envy. But if you honour and praise someone according to his real worth, that preserves both your own personality and his, and, as a result, neither he would fall into the trap of vanity, nor would you compromise your respect and worth.

Moreover, as exaggerated compliments are not based on fact and do not arise from within the heart, one cannot depend on someone's hypocritical praise and compliments, for if he praises one in one's presence with a certain purpose he might also indulge, behind one's back, in any kind of backbiting or defamation for some other end of his.

Ali-may peace be upon him-describes this repulsive characteristic of sycophants in' these words:

One who compliments you for some merit that you do not possess will have no qualms blaming you and accusing you of some vice that is not in you.(2)

In the same way as appreciation and encouragement are one of man's psychological needs whose fulfilment leads to progress and development, constant and undue blame and censure produce a detrimental

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١- Nahj al-balaghah, trans. Fayd al-Islam, p. ٩٩٠, "Kutub," no. ٥٣ addressed to Malik al-Ashtar.

٢- Al-Amidi, op. cit., p. ٦٧١.

effect on one's psyche and lead into vice and deviance. The Commander of the :Faithful-may peace be upon him-said

Abstain from frequent reproach for such a practice has vicious consequences and (makes censure ineffective.(۱

Bringing joy to one's children is an effective way of winning their love and is beneficial for strengthening their emotional ties with other people. The Noble Messenger (s) :said

Whenever a father looks lovingly at his child and makes him joyous, he receives a (reward from God that is equal to that of setting free a slave.(۲

:Bertrand Russell writes

Blame should be given much more sparingly than praise. It should be a definite punishment, administered for some unexpected lapse from good behaviour, and it should never be continued after it has produced its effect ... To win the genuine affection of children is a joy as great as any that life has to offer. Our grandfathers did not know of this joy, and therefore they did not know that they were missing it. They taught children that it was their 'duty' to love their parents, and proceeded to make this duty almost impossible of performance. Caroline, in the verse quoted at the beginning of this chapter, can hardly have been pleased when her father went to her, 'to whip her, there's no doubt.' So long as people persisted in the notion that love could be commanded as a duty they did nothing to win it as genuine emotion. Consequently human relations remained stark and harsh and cruel. Punishment was part

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.Al-Amidi, op. cit., p. ۳۵۹ -۱
.Al-Nuri, Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, vol. ii, p. ۶۲۶ -۲

of this whole conception. It is strange that men who would not have dreamed of raising their hand against a woman were quite willing to inflict physical torture upon a defenceless child. Mercifully, a better conception of the relations of parents and children has gradually won its way during the last hundred years, and with it the whole theory of punishment has been transformed. I hope that the enlightened ideas which begin to prevail in education will gradually spread to other human relations as well: for they are needed there just as much as in our dealings with our children.(۱)

This approach to the upbringing of children which this British philosopher ascribes to the last hundred years was part of the educational program of the Prophet of Islam thirteen centuries ago. His affection and kindness were not confined to his own children but extended, in the most unaffected and natural manner, to other children as well, whom he treated with loving care and attention. His biographers write about him:

It was the habit of the Messenger to show love to children.

The Campaign Against Vices

An effective way of encouraging good people and discouraging those guilty of misconduct is to implement the rule of 'enjoining good conduct and forbidding misconduct' (al-amr bi al-ma'ruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar) in society. The spread of immorality and vicious conduct obliterates the worth of moral values which are the foundations of society's welfare and glory, and drive people off the path of piety and godfearing towards sinfulness. Sin, by nature, spreads

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۱- Russell, op. cit., pp. ۹۵, ۹۷-۹۸.

rapidly, and like an epidemic spreads from one point to another affecting entire .society

If a serious and consistent effort is not made against vice at the point of its origin, its circle of influence increases continually, contaminating the surrounding areas and spreading to other healthy regions. The evil consequences of vice not only affect those who perpetrate it, but ruin even those who by their connivance and indifference permit it to grow and spread. That is because they abstain from any kind of corrective action and despite their power to prevent sin take a passive attitude towards it. Such persons share the guilt of polluting and ruining the social environment and get .punished for their offence

Hence, instead of remaining silent and indifferent, one should realise his own duty to counter immoral conduct. Because in the same way as one who leads others into deviance is an agent of corruption, so also one who is indifferent to the sinner's conduct and who fails to assist him despite possessing the means to do so is also an .agent of immorality of another kind

The teachers of morality and human excellence and the guides of nations-each in accordance with his level and situation-have brought the vices of various kinds and their harmful consequences to the notice of the people. They have called attention to the fact that any misfeasance and negligence in regard to any of these matters and immorality in the Vice results in destroying and undermining the spirit of freedom. In a

society whose members have lost the capacity to perceive realities, vice is seen as virtue, waywardness as freedom, and retrogression as progress.

The precepts of religion emphasise that anyone who sees an immoral act being committed should stop it with the means at his disposal. They prescribe various levels and degrees of opposition to vice, so that whatever one's situation might be he should be able to use these means for its prevention. Those who have the influence and power to prevent unlawful conduct have the duty, assigned by God, to use their power to discipline the offenders and draw them toward the path of purity. If one does not possess the needed power to prevent moral misconduct in society, his duty is to guide by the word of mouth and to point out in an effective manner the evils of misconduct and its undesirable effects on life. Obviously, the speaker himself should be one who practices these moral virtues and values and is committed to them, so that his exhortations are earnestly accepted by others. Otherwise his admonitions would not go to their hearts and his insipid and lifeless preaching would be barren and fruitless.

The duty of someone who does not possess even this capacity is to condemn immoral conduct by disapproving of it and resenting it in his heart. Of course, in such circumstances when one cannot influence others one must not be content with merely taking a negative and passive attitude; rather, it is necessary that his inner

indignation should lead to positive results. That is, he must break his ties of friendship with the offender so that the latter is made to feel like an outcast who cannot expect .friendship and co-operation from others

Opposition to immoral conduct has a special importance in Islam, which is very earnest in its struggle against vice and in its commitment to guide humanity towards ethical merits in all phases of moral development. The Qur'an has well described the meaning of salvation by stating that it exclusively belongs to those who call people to :virtue and prevent them from vice

Let there be one nation of you, calling to good, and bidding to honour, and forbidding (dishonour; those are the finders of salvation. (۳:۱۰۴

The Role of Appreciation in Social Progress

Accordingly, salvation and prosperity belong to those whose conduct is based on this principle. Commanding others to righteous conduct and forbidding misconduct is an inalienable part of their life's program. In another verse of the same surah, the highest stations of human nobility and merit are ascribed to people who always :practice this principle throughout the various stages of life

You are the best nation ever brought forth to men, bidding to honour and forbidding (dishonour, and believing in God. (۳:۱۱۰

:Ali-may peace be upon him-said'

Always bid the members of society to virtues and practise them yourself. Beware lest you be one of those who bid others to do good but themselves refrain from it, otherwise the sinfulness of such conduct will overtake you and God's wrath shall seize (you.(۱

The Prophet of

١- Al-Amidi, op. cit., p. ٥٦٩.

:Islam-may peace and God's benedictions be upon him and his Household-said

My followers shall live in welfare as long as they do not abandon the duty of bidding to good conduct and forbidding misconduct and co-operate with one another in good works. But when they abandon this program in life, the blessings will be withdrawn from them and some of them (i.e. tyrants) shall be imposed on the rest. As a result they will suffer, but they will neither find any refuge on the earth, nor any helper will (come to their aid from anywhere.(١

In the civilised world of today some countries have framed and implemented laws resembling the principle of al-amr bi al-ma'ruf wa al- nahy 'an al-munkar with the objective of strengthening the moral foundations of their societies and promoting :justice and right conduct. An informed writer says

It is an undeniable truth that if justice is to be established in society everyone must be committed to its preservation, like the Swiss people in whose constitution these words-which sound like a verse out of some scripture-have been written: "On observing the slightest violation of justice it is the duty and obligation of all individuals (not to rest until justice has been restored."(٢

This maxim is exactly like the duty that was legislated fourteen centuries ago by Islam .for every individual Muslim

Chapter ٨: The Shortest Road to Success

point

In the scheme of creation, every being that comes into existence develops and grows in struggle and adversity right from the first day of its life until the time

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.Al-Shaykh al-Tusi, Tahdhib al-ahkam, vol. ii, p. ٥٨ -١

.The Persian daily Ittila'at, Adhar Mah, ١٣٤٢ H. Sh -٢

when it attains to the apex of its perfection. This is a law of nature that rules over all .existents

Every person is inclined to select the shortest route to success in life and to get the fastest results from his efforts. But in any enterprise one cannot shorten his route without patience and reach the desired objective. There is no possibility of progress .or development without this moral virtue

Anyone who desires to achieve success and lead a fruitful existence, whether he is a man of ordinary talents or someone endowed with exceptional creativity, will power, intelligence and genius, must cultivate patience by drawing inspiration from the workings of the system of creation. With wisdom and a realistic outlook, he should .view life in its vast and resplendent panorama

A great work is never accomplished instantaneously and spontaneously. A huge amount of energy and time is required to implement big plans and to bring valuable undertakings to fruition. A short-lived effort, however brilliant, will not result in lasting .success

Yes, it is by self-reliance and endurance that one can remove all the various kinds of obstacles from the path of progress and plough through adversity and hardship, .because victory is always associated with a series of problems and impediments

We observe some people achieve remarkable success in life, while there are some who languish behind the caravan of life. The basic difference between those who succeed and others who fail and lag behind lies in the quality of their efforts and the extent of

their steadfastness in the face of life's adverse factors. There are many people who, instead of thinking of a solution, come to a standstill as soon as they encounter a small obstacle on their way, although they possess real and remarkable abilities; or they act in a haphazard manner without accomplishing with seriousness and steadfastness any of the tasks that they undertake. Their morale is always shaky and accompanied with a lack of confidence. Negligence and default have become second nature with .them. Such people never achieve success in life

Life is a relentless and intense struggle extending from the first phases of life to its last moments. Patience and fortitude are the most effective weapon in this unceasing battle. Victory on this battlefield belongs to those who are courageous and unflinching and who do not succumb to obstacles under any condition. No matter how frequently they may stumble and fall, they rise up and continue their endeavour and overcome .difficulties with sagacity and level headedness

If our spiritual capacities be of a mediocre or even a poor quality and should we be of quite ordinary intelligence, fortitude can strengthen and complement our personality. The removal of one obstacle and the solution of a problem prepares us further for facing new obstacles and creates a measure of inner resilience. Every small task that we accomplish adds to the momentum of the flywheel of our activity, guides us towards bigger and worthier tasks, and gives greater preparedness to our minds in combating problems

.and pursuing our goals

Dr. Marden describes the role of adversity in the development of man's spiritual :faculties in these words

In the same way as the best and strongest tools are forged with the help of the heat of a furnace, so also noble morals develop in the straits of hardship. The greater the .hardness and brilliance of a diamond, the more is the friction required to grind it

Kant, the German philosopher, says: "A pigeon in its flight considers the air to be the only hindrance in its way; it imagines that had there been no air it would have flown faster and with greater ease. Yet without the air it would have been unable to fly in a vacuum and would fall to the ground. Hence the same element that poses resistance ".to the pigeon in its flight is basically that which makes flight at all possible

The effort to climb to an elevated station is greatly valuable: even if one fails to reach his intended goal, such effort would make him stronger. An encounter with great events may lead lethargic persons who do not use their brains and have no aim in life .to acquire unprecedented abilities and success in life

Often a young man faced with his father's death or the loss of wealth or some other calamity, loses the crutches that he leaned upon and acquires an unusual and remarkable vigour. Imprisonment has often revealed the hidden fire that lay in many individuals. When God wishes to train a

man and raise him to a high station He sends him to the school of necessity and need .not to that of ease and good fortune

Take two acorns each of which has been plucked from the same oak tree and which are almost identical. Plant them in two separate places one on a mountain slope and another in a dense forest. Then observe how their roots grow. The oak that grows on the mountainside where it has to withstand wind rain and storms runs its roots in all directions and grows into a sturdy and shadowy tree. But the oak planted he oak in the woods since it is situated under the shadow of other trees grows to he lean and .weak

In the same way take two boys who are about similar and bring them up in two different places. That is put one of them in an environment where he is forced to face hard and difficult conditions right from his childhood and is deprived of wealth or any kind of supports. Such a one should he stumble and fall will get up again with a firmer determination like a ball which bounces to a greater height the more forcefully it is hit against the ground. The greater the obstacles he encounters the more determined he will become. But the other child brought up in ease and plenty and in the care of a team of nurses who got everything he desired and had lots of money will be

(less resistant in the face of hardship and will break down sooner.(1)

The Bounteous Source of Strength

Every human being is innately endowed with the capacity to face adversity. It is our duty to employ our resources for encountering adverse conditions and bring our remarkable powers into action. Man's latent inner powers comprise a bounteous source whose treasures are never exhausted. In fact the more they are put to use the more profuse their flow becomes. Despair and despondency and the inability to resist hardship are not due to any inborn lack of capacity. Rather it is the chain of despair and faint heartedness which shackles the hands of some people and neutralises their .power of resistance to problems

This kind of people fall victim to a kind of paralysing confusion and perplexity when faced with any trivial difficulty. Their spirit and morale can even be totally shattered in a single encounter with some sudden tragedy which makes them lose their poise and equilibrium. It is harder to remedy this weakness of character than any other moral .inadequacy

Those who rely on the constancy of their efforts are closer to success and advancement than those who depend on their personal talents and abilities. No matter how much intelligence perspicacity and refined positive effort they will not .reach fruition

The world's eminent thinkers didn't come from a particular social class. Rather most of them grew up in difficult conditions and began their climb in the midst of hardships. It was the pressure of hardship and deprivation that gave the strength

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.Orison Swett Mardenm, The Victorious Attitude, pp. ۵۹-۶۱ -۱

to survive in the face of various kinds of enervating problems to those who have developed distinguished and sublime personalities whose fame has spread far and wide and who have even brought glory and honour to their societies. It was this factor which gave them toughness and strength and enabled them to climb the ladder of .progress with a decisive will

There is a story that once a Chinese student who had failed to make any progress in his studies took all his books and threw them away out of despair. At that moment he saw a poor woman filing away a piece of iron with untiring tenacity in order to make a needle out of it. This scene produced a great upheaval in his spirit and moved him strongly. It taught him an important lesson: he decided to go back to his class and continue his studies at all cost. He put this resolution into effect and with the fortitude that he developed within himself he came to rank amongst the famous scholars of his .age and became one of the foremost scientists of his era

The Principles of Life

Learning the principles of life is something which must be achieved by their study and through reflecting about them so that one may equip oneself adequately in the struggles of life and attune himself to life. The wheels of life cannot be set into motion with immature fancies and romantic imaginings and ideas. One should not make judgements about life on the basis of frivolous

notions. The pattern of problems keeps on changing all the time and they take on a new face. One continually confronts problems which have no precedent and life is .nothing except the endeavour to solve these complex problems and difficulties

Those who are faced with intractable problems that appear to be insoluble under existing conditions have only one alternative before them in order to achieve their goal: to increase their efforts and seriousness to remain steadfast and to make full use of the available opportunities. When they proceed on their way with these qualities their fortitude will ultimately yield its fruits and they will fully attain their .sought goal

It often happens that the hardships which in the beginning cloud the horizon of one's life with their dark and unfriendly countenance appear altogether in a different light in the end. Felicity and success emerge from the dark clouds of adversity that one once sought to escape like flashes of lightning accompanied with beneficent rains that .water the fields of one's hopes and aspirations

The Lessons of Failure

The most brilliant kind of success is achieved by those who are able to analyse the causes of their failure and defeat and derive the utmost benefit from them. Examining the causes of a failure by itself leads one to identify one's difficulties as well as their solution. It opens up in front of one a hopeful and dynamic perspective in which the path to victory is clearly visible. In this way, one can employ one's reserves of thought and

.energy and alter the whole situation in a radical manner

The best of one's efforts become manifest when one encounters an obstacle or defeat in the pursuit of his aspirations. There are many individuals who do not .discover themselves until they have lost everything

Those who have inner substance do not give up their perseverance unless they have extracted the elements of greatness from the depths of hardship and defeat and who do not abandon their efforts until they are triumphant. Every work that they begin is marked with vigour and energy and their great personal qualities are cast in the very .heat of failure

It is a mistake to be embarrassed by one's defeat. Obstacles are like thorns that usually grow on the path of men of action. A total bankruptcy occurs only when one takes the failure to make a headway in some task as a permanent defeat and loses all his confidence. The feeling of personal inadequacy and weakness may bring a person to a standstill and keep him from every kind of effort to make amends for his defeat .and frustration

One of the first urges that manifests itself in a human being is the desire to win and dominate. But if he should always stick to his ordinary routine the will to struggle and .endeavour becomes extinguished in his spirit

It is possible that some precious talents may lie dormant within a person that develop and shine solely as a result of the abrasion of adversity which gives them their

burnish. In reality, most people remain unaware of their inner talents and gifts due to the absence of encounter with obstacles and defeats. As a result, they do not become .aware of the power that lies latent in the depths of their being

:Dale Carnegie writes

About twenty-five years ago one day a school teacher forcefully slapped a boy twice in the face for being restless in the class and for constantly chattering and jolting on his bench. The teacher slapped him in front of the pupils and so humiliated him that the poor child went home sobbing. At that time he was no more than five years, but at that tender age he concluded that the way he had been treated was absolutely unjust and unfair. From that moment he came to have a strong feeling of hatred and .repulsion for injustice against which he struggled until the end of his life

His name was Clarence Darrow and perhaps he was the foremost lawyer and undoubtedly the greatest criminal lawyer of his era. Countless times his name and renown occupied the first pages of American newspapers. Even now the elderly people of Ashtabula in the United States talk about his first trial and the first case that was referred to him. He raised a great clamour over the case although the dispute related to a number of horse bridles all together worth merely five dollars. When asked why he had raised such an uproar over a few horse bridles, he replied: "The

main thing is the defence of truth, not the worth of something for which the trial is held." He displayed such vigour and courage in the coarse of his trials and fought in such a manner as if he were facing a tiger of Bengal and was forced to defend himself. A defendant who had chosen him to fight the case had paid him a fee of five dollars, but since the case was not settled he took it to seven courts at his own expense, pursuing it diligently for seven years until he was triumphant in the end. Darrow used to say that he never accepted a case for money or personal prestige.(۱)

All the remarkable accomplishments and the invaluable services rendered to human society, which are today regarded as ordinary means of life, were in the beginning considered impossible by most people. In the past if someone were bold enough to regard them as possible, he would have been considered a fool and ridiculed even in scientific circles. Today, with all their value, people have forgotten their significance and they do not amaze any onlooker.

But all these inventions and techniques were not discovered by men of action in a short period. They were products of years of painful effort and toil. In some cases, with utmost patience, they devoted their entire lives to the solution of difficult and complex problems. It was with the untiring efforts of those men of determination that these things entered the world of reality

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۱- Dale Carnegie, Ramz e muwaffaqiyat dar zindagi, p. ۳۵.

:and put on the garment of existence. Emerson says

Those who have been successful have all been in agreement over the fact that there is a certain connection between cause and effect. In other words, they believed that in the sphere of life events do not take place by chance and fortuity; rather everything is subject to a law. There is no missing or feeble link between the first and the last (links of the chain.(۱

The Means of Perfection

Steadfastness and struggle in the face of problems are the means of achieving perfection and a prelude to prosperity. Difficulties play a decisive and undeniable role in personal growth and development. Had there been no tests and tribulations in life, piety, human merit and worth would not have any value, and self-discipline and self-restraint would have been irrelevant.

Similarly, if difficulties did not exist and were every effort to lead to spontaneous success, there would not have been any motive for struggle and advancement would have come to a standstill.

Accordingly, the pinch of difficulty and failure is not only not harmful, it brings dormant capacities into action and completes man's moral character and makeup, sometimes becoming even the biggest source of his strength.

One should form a correct picture of life in his mind so that one is not confounded and baffled by events or swept away by life's vicissitudes like a piece of straw in a violent stream. Rather, he should prepare himself like an expert swimmer who is able to swim as he chooses

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Ralph Waldo, Raz e Khushbakhti, p. ۲۳ -۱

in the shoreless sea of events, and confront all the various factors that affect different aspects of life. If the barrier of obstacles does not allow one to advance and the conditions become too complex, the path of patience is always open, and the intelligent man takes this path under unfavourable conditions.

There are many people who fall victim to unrealistic fancies and build castles in the air. Their great expectations find a place only in the world of imagination. Their ideas remain unfulfilled and never reach the stage of realisation through steady effort and patience. There is a great distance that separates the world of imagination from the world of action. Hence one should enter the active arena of life with a realistic approach to its constructive elements, making patient effort to reach the goal and without neglecting the effort to increase one's energy and zeal. One author writes:

It is a waste of one's life to build castles in the air. Of course, nothing is more enchanting than these fancies wherein one builds for himself high castles in the boundless space of his imagination. But if these wishes are to be transported from the world of imagination to the world of reality, these castles should he built on the ground not in the air.(١)

Most people do not make realistic judgements about themselves. Whenever they face a defeat, they invent excuses to prove that they have not made any mistakes. In such situations, instead of reproaching themselves they hold others responsible

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١- Ibid p. ٧.

for their failure. Only rarely do success and advancement come to a capricious and unsteady person who, as it might happen, is carried a long distance, like a wooden log driven by the river's flood. But even such rare victories are followed by setbacks or defeat. In many cases, such people, when viewing the progress made by others, forget the hard work and toil undertaken by them in attaining their goal and the perils and dangers faced by them.

A European man of arms who felt that his friend was being envious of him said to him:

If you are envious of my laurels, position, and rank, you can obtain them more easily than I did. Come, let us go into the yard. I will shoot twenty bullets at you from a distance of thirty strides. If none of them hits you and will decline my proposal. Very well. But remember that I did not get my present rank and position without becoming the target of bullets a thousand times, each time with death in front of my eyes.(۱)

Some people learn only in the shadow of defeat. They discover what they should do in order to be victorious and the things they must avoid. A setback or loss does not upset them, for they have found out that a sustained and steady effort is necessary to compensate for the past setbacks. They learn that losses and setbacks must be made good for in other ways, for the simplest and cheapest way to

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۱- Samuel Smiles, Akhlaq e Samuel, vol. ۲ p ۱۸۵.

avoid them in the future is to learn from one's past mistakes and failures. Similarly, one can learn beneficial things from the study of the causes of others' progress and .success. A study of life and experience simplify many difficulties

The facts of history show that all kinds of arms and military equipment-which are by themselves lifeless objects-fetch victory and triumph in the hands of those who possess fortitude. Such men are undefeatable; they preserve their initiative on the battlefield and overpower the enemy, for often the difference between the winner .and the loser is no more than a few minutes of fortitude and resistance

The Importance of Self Discipline

One of the essential and useful principles that contributes effectively to man's progress and development is discipline and the quality of his activity. This is a fundamental rule based on experience and insight. The intelligent man is one who keeps his eyes and ears open to opportunities. His mind is open to the right formulas and solutions, and before every undertaking he gives sufficient forethought to its .potential for positive results

The people who build their lives on deep foundations advance much more rapidly and more confidently than those who act in a disorderly and undisciplined manner. The absence of discipline and orderliness brings great harm, a loss that cannot be easily .compensated by anything

Someone may devote long years of his life to a certain kind of work but due to lack of sufficient insight and knowledge he makes no remarkable progress despite years of toil. Another person

may spend lesser time doing similar work but every day that passes brings him closer to his goal. He benefits from the fruits of his work and constantly adds to the list of his .successes

In the same way, often one who makes undue haste either does not reach his destination safely, or he prolongs his journey by taking the wrong route. The harm of undue haste in making plans and decisions is not lesser than the danger of negligence .and weakness of will

Ultimately, it is calculated action and correct thinking concerning the solution of problems that determine an individual's capacity to make progress. The same holds .true in case of nations

More than anything else society for its survival and edification needs men of fortitude who are not deterred by difficulties and who combine in themselves this characteristic with knowledge and science and employ them in the path of reform. If scientific genius and political acumen are not accompanied with patience and fortitude they will .not yield any noteworthy results

The Noble Qur'an exhorts the Holy Prophet of Islam that in order to achieve success he should never flag in his steadfastness at any stage and that he should resist :subversive elements

Be steadfast as you have been commanded, you and those who have turned with you (to God). ۱۱:۱۲

Be as steadfast (in pursuing your sacred purpose) as you have been commanded to be, and do not follow the desires of the people. ۴۲:۱۵

In some verses God says to the great Prophet of

Islam: "It is possible to attain victory and relief in the midst of hardships. It is possible to attain success as a result of adversity. Whenever you get relief devote yourself to effort and endeavour and put your hope in the great Lord."

In these verses one is reminded that the flame of effort and enterprise must never be allowed to go out. Rather following every success and victory one must prepare oneself to welcome future hardships. That is so because there is nothing like absolute ease in this world and one should not expect to find it here.

Will Durant writes:

Will which is unified desire is ... the characteristic form of growing life; and its strength and stature increase only as life finds for it new labours and new victories. If we wish to be strong we must first choose our goal and plot our road; then we must cleave to whatever betide. The way of caution here is to undertake at first only that which we may rely upon ourselves to carry through; for every failure will weaken us and every success will make us stronger. It is achievement that makes achievement; by little conquests we gain strength and confidence for larger ones; practice makes will.

But then one can be too cautious and by turning away from the beckoning of great deeds remain forever small. Make sure that modest virtues shall not content you; on the morning after your triumph having feasted for a day, look about you for

the next week and larger task. Face danger, and seek responsibility. It is true that they may defeat you may even destroy you; but the date of the one death which you must die is too slight a chronological detail to distort) philosophy. If they do not kill you they will strengthen you and lift you nearer to greatness and your goal. Make or](break. (١

A study of the triumphant life of the Prophet of Islam his patience and steadfastness for the sake of the triumph of truth and guidance of the mankind, will not leave any need for an explanation in this regard. The secret of the victory of Muslims in the early era of Islam was their faith and unflagging resistance against dangerous enemies. The record of these heroic efforts occupies a prominent place in the pages of world .history

Mere Adherence to Islam Does Not Lead to Victory

In some of its verses the Noble Qur'an gives the good news of victory and superior power to Muslims while reminding them that these advantages will not come easily: the Divine good tidings will come true only when the people act knowingly in accordance with their duties. Sincere faith is fruitful when coupled with character. Hence those who separate faith from works their hopes of success will never be .fulfilled. It is action and effort which rescue one from the valley of loss and failure

O believers, if you help God He will assist you and make your feet steady. ۴۷:۷

During the Battle of Uhud the Muslims had to face

.Will Durrant, The Mansions of Philosophy, p. ۲۷۱ -۱

a catastrophic setback for disobeying the Prophet's orders by leaving their positions for the sake of collecting the spoils of war. As a result of this unexpected setback their morale was shaken for they imagined that it was sufficient for them to be Muslims in order to overcome all hostile elements and that they would never face defeat and failure. "Why should we have been defeated and made to suffer at the hands of God's enemies. Why should have our belongings been plundered by them"? they thought. Such thoughts intensely demoralised them. In order to enlighten and console them and make them abandon their unrealistic notions God shows them the way to :overcome their hardships

You shall surely be tried in your possessions and your selves, and you shall hear from those who were given the Book before you, and from those who are idolaters, much hurt; but if you are patient and Godwary, surely that is true constancy. ۳:۱۸۶

In this verse hardship and the loss of life and property are considered one of the aspects of Divine testing. Men of faith, like all other people, are exposed to undesirable events in the course of this life. This way God tests all His servants. However, the men of faith have such fortitude in face of adversity that their fear and loss of morale are changed into steadfastness and security. Faith leads them to overcome fear and despair, making individuals used to sacrifice and fortitude and thus purifying their hearts, spirits and

.feelings

:Rousseau says

Do you think any man can find true happiness elsewhere than in his natural state; and when you try to spare him all suffering, are you not taking him out of his natural state? Indeed I maintain that to enjoy great happiness he must experience slight ills; such is his nature. Too much bodily prosperity corrupts the morals. A man who knows no suffering would he incapable of tenderness towards his fellow-creatures and ignorant ... of the joys of pity; he would be hard hearted, unsocial, a very monster among men

They (spoiled children) are used to find everything give way to them; what a painful surprise to enter society and meet with opposition on every side, to be crushed beneath the weight or a universe which they expected to score at will.... Sharp experience teaches them that they have realised neither their position nor their strength. As they cannot do everything, they think they can do nothing. They are daunted by unexpected obstacles, degraded by the scorn of men; they become base, cowardly, and deceitful, and fall as far below their true level as they formerly soared (above it.(۱

Patience does not mean waiting for fate to solve the problems or surrendering to the tyranny of hardship. One must be careful to note this point so that one correctly understands the role of Divine ordainment in progress and prosperity or fall and misfortune. The Divine law concerning victory is that it is to be attained by effort and steadfastness. This

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.Rousseau, Emily, pp. ۱۰۰-۱۰۳ -۱

is the indubitable duty associated with faith. God announces the good news of victory :that comes as a result of its observance in these words

O believers be patient and vie you in patience, be steadfast, fear God, haply so will you prosper. ۳:۲۰۰

In this verse the people are reminded that they ought to be forbearing and steadfast in the face of injustice, oppression, dictatorship, and deviance and misguidance on others' part and strive collectively to overcome the problems of their society. They should keep a vigilant eye over their dangerous enemies and stop infiltration of the aliens firmly and patiently. It is the duty of godly men to confront the aggressors with power, fight the enemy, and to avoid every kind of disgrace and abasement. They have the duty before God to observe piety and God-fearing in all their activities so that their efforts attain fruition. That is because it is only in the shadow of piety that one can implement the Divine commands in the best possible manner never forgetting one's duties under any condition whatsoever. External pressures may at times make one deviate towards the right or the left, but piety and sincerity of .intention produce a balanced and desirable harmony in his soul

:A European scholar writes

Tragedies and unpleasant incidents make a training ground of piety and moral merit. hardships bring wisdom and awareness to the mind and rectify one's sense of judgement. They also restrain a person from hedonism, immorality, and sin. God, who governs the world

of being with His perfect wisdom and compassion, has sent these hardships and difficulties into the world directing them especially at good and wise men so that they may learn the way of attaining true ease and prosperity and habituate themselves to patience, fortitude and forbearance in hardships and so as to bring them to the gates .of glory and pride

No one is more unfortunate than him who has never faced adversity and hardship. The real character of such a person who has not undergone any test remains unknown. The merits which arc congenital and part of one's nature have no value or worth before God. God rewards man only for merits which, are acquired through (effort and endeavour and are manifested in action.(۱

Two Potent Educative Factors

The latent capacities of every being develop and mature when assisted by the various inner and outer agents in the course of its development. Man is also not an exception to this rule, with the difference however that the development of other creatures is confined to specific limits whereas the stages of man's development and growth are unlimited and unbounded. That is why he has a great need of basic and comprehensive education for developing and reaching the station worthy of his .humanity. Hence several factors are responsible for his spiritual growth

Two factors play an important and fundamental role in the growth of human faculties. One of them consists of the heavenly teachings of God-sent prophets which, like a sun, shine on all the domains of the

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.Samuel Smiles, Akhlaq e Samuel, vol. ۲ p ۲۰۹ -۱

human spirit and gradually liberate it from the darkness of unhealthy traits and .qualities, giving the soul its brilliance and burnish

The second factor which can assist man in reaching this goal and attaining the fulfilment worthy of him are the problems, hardships and difficulties of life. Until man is not reformed and refined in the shadow of the luminous heavenly teachings and the pressures of life and unless his spirit is purged of the impurities of animal traits, his spirit and will become subject to mundane things and he is swept away like a piece of straw by the waves of material gain and surrenders to everything except God. As long as his spirit remains confined in the darkness and veils of carnal desires which hold his being in their bondage, he cannot perceive the fruitful and critical role of hardship in bringing him to true independence and fashioning his human personality As a result the pressure of adversity produces a kind of anxiety and despair in him. The Qur'an says

Surely man was created fretful when evil visits him, impatient ... ۷۰:۱۹-۲۰

As for man, whenever his Lord tries him, and honours him, and blesses him then he says: My Lord has honoured me. But when He tries him and stints him his provision, then he says: My Lord has humiliated me. ۸۹:۱۵-۱۶

These states pertain to the condition of an unrefined human being. But when the human heart is revived with the religious urge, it attains the inner freedom which

is the goal of all heavenly teachings Then, he becomes liberated from total reliance on fake materialistic values and becomes the master of his world. It is a freedom and liberty that is free from the traces of animal unruliness and free from all obstacles and .hurdles that hinder man from development, perfection, and sublimity

Fake values do not tempt a righteous and developed human being and do not overshadow his spirit and understanding. While explaining the philosophy of life's :hardships and afflictions, which is human liberation, God says

That you may not grieve for what escapes you nor rejoice for what has come to you. ۵۷:۲۳

Thus when man liberates himself from the servitude of everything other than God and does not submit to anything except the Truth, he finds a wonderful and extraordinary power within himself One who is trained in such a school of thought has .a broad vision, an awakened heart and a piercing insight

The principle that one should forget that which is lost and gone and not rejoice on attaining something has another educate result. It is that when the feelings of sorrow and grief felt over some loss preoccupy one's mind they make one's creative faculties and activities to become stagnant On the other hand, rejoicing over some achievement dwarfs one's efforts and goals making them limited and diverting attention from things which are better and higher. As a result one fails to advance .further on the path of progress and edification

Jean-Jacques Rousseau says

The illusions of pride

are the source of our greatest ills; but the contemplation of human suffering keeps the wise humble He keeps to his proper place and makes no attempt to depart from it; he does not waste his strength in gelling what he cannot keep; and his whole strength being devoted to the right employment of what he has, he is in reality richer and more powerful in proportion as he desires less than we A man, subject to death and change, shall I forge for myself lasting chains upon this earth, where everything changes and disappears whence I myself shall shortly vanish! Oh, Emile! my son! if I were to lose you, what would be left of myself And yet I must learn to lose you, for ?who knows when you may be taken away from me

Would you live in wisdom and happiness, fix your heart on the beauty that is eternal; let your desires be limited by your position; let y our duties take precedence of your wishes; extend the law of necessity into the region of morals; learn to lose what may be taken from you; learn to forsake all things al the command of virtue, to set yourself above the chances of life, to detach your heart before it is torn in pieces, to be brave in adversity so that you may never he wretched, to be steadfast in duty that you will ,never be guilty of a crime Then you will be happy in spite of fortune

p: ۲۵۱

and good in spite of your passions You will find a pleasure that cannot be destroyed, even in the procession of the most fragile things; you will possess them, they will not possess you, and you will realise that the man who loses everything, only enjoys what he knows how to resign.(۱)

In one of his aphorisms, Imam 'Ali ('a) gives this lesson to human beings;

It is through severe adversity that one can attain through higher stations and lasting peace.(۲)

Emerson, the American philosopher, writes:

The changes which break up at short intervals the prosperity of men advertisements of a nature whose law is growth. Every soul is by this intrinsic necessity of quitting its whole system of things, its friends and home and laws and faith, as the shell fish crawls out of its beautiful but stony ease, because it no longer admits of its growth, and slowly forms a new house. In proportion to the vigour of individuals these revolutions are frequent, until in some happier mind they are incessant and all worldly relations hang very loosely about him, becoming as it were a transparent fluid membrane through which the living form is seen, and not, as in most men, an undurable heterogeneous fabric of many dates and of no settled character, in which the man is imprisoned. Then there can be enlargement, and the man of today scarcely recognises the man of yesterday. And such should be the outward biography of man in time, a putting off of dead circumstances

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۱- Rouseau, Emily, p. ۵۴۷.

۲- al Amidi, Ghurar al Hikam, p. ۳۳۷.

day by day, as he renews his raiment day by day. But to us, in our lapsed estate, resting, not advancing, resisting, not co-operating with the divine expansion, this .growth comes by shocks

We cannot part with our friends. We cannot let our angels go. We do not sec that they only go out that archangels may come in. We are idolaters of the old. We do not believe in the riches of the soul, in its proper eternity and omnipresence. We do not believe there is any force in to-day to rival or recreate that beautiful yesterday. We linger in the ruins of the old tent where once one had bread and shelter and organs, nor believe that the spirit can feed, cover, and nerve us again. We cannot again find aught so dear, so sweet, so graceful. But we sit and weep in vain. The voice Of the Almighty said, "Up and onward and for evermore!" We cannot stay amid the ruins. Neither will we rely on the new, and so we walk ever with reverted eyes, like those .monsters who look backwards

And yet the compensations Or calamity are made apparent to the understanding also, after long intervals or time. A fever, a mutilation, a cruel disappointment), a loss Of wealth, a loss Of friends, seems at the moment unpaid loss, and unpayable. But the sure years reveal the deep remedial force that underlies all facts. The death of a ,friend, wife, brother, lover, which seemed nothing but privation

somewhat later assumes the aspect of a guide or genius; for it commonly operates revolutions in our way of life, terminates an epoch of infancy or of youth which was waiting to be closed, breaks up a wonted occupation, or a household, or style of living, and allows the formation of new ones more friendly to the growth of character. It permits or constrains the formation of new acquaintances and the reception of new influences that prove of the first importance to the next years; and the man or woman who would have remained a sunny garden-flower, with no room for its rests and too much sunshine for its head, by the falling of the walls and the neglect of the gardener is made the minder of the forest, yielding shade and fruit to wide (neighbourhoods of men.(۱

In one of his letters to 'Uthman ibn Hunayf, Imam ''Ali ('a) likens those who grow in the midst of hardship and adversity to the tough trees that grow in dry mountains and :those who live in comfort and ease to the delicate plants of a garden

Indeed, the tree of the desert that is used to its harsh and waterless conditions has a tough fibre. The fire produced by its wood is stronger and more intense and enduring. But the trees Of an orchard have a delicate bark and weak fibre and are easily (broken.(۲

:In his exhortations, he declares

(Be careful not to abandon your activity whether you may feel energetic or sluggish.(۳

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.Emerson, Compensation, The Social Philosophers, pp ۴۴۵-۶ -۱

.Nahj al Balaghah, p. ۴۱۸ -۲

.Ghurar al Hikam, p. ۴۸۰ -۳

(diligent in your efforts even if your body's strength does not assist you.(۱

One who neglects his responsibilities and the opportunity to fulfil them will be helpless (after the opportunity is lost.(۲

:William John Reilly, the well-known American writer, says

Millions of people who ceased their efforts at the very dawn of success to relax have perished in that state of rest and immobility. Most of our thoughts are so spontaneous that we never get the chance to be aware of that which goes on in our minds. If we restrain our thoughts for a moment to see what we are doing, we would find that every day we take a number of decisions. At the end of every week, we would have taken several hundred decisions. But we do not notice that most of our decisions were a result of inattention and neglect. That is, we allow things to happen while we .imagine that we have taken a decision, whereas, in fact, we have been negligent

It is wrong, especially, to keep on putting off matters. Indeed, when we delay taking a decision we do actually take a decision. That is, we decide not to act and take the necessary decision regarding a matter, whereas postponing action is itself a kind of .decision

Delay and negligence are very easy, especially if you practically deceive yourself by saying that you will do better in the future and will be more successful. In this way you dope your mind and hypnotise it on the pretext

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.Ibid p. ۴۸۳ -۱

.Ibid p. ۶۵۳ -۲

that the future will be better than the present conditions and circumstances. You only deceive yourself by believing that the future will be without problems and hindrances and that hardships and difficulties are temporary and passing. But in fact all good and relatively important tasks are faced with problems. These is no magic in the future. It is the present success that is yours and present opportunities are more valuable than past successes and the hopes and promises of the future.(۱)

A Superb Advantage

Faith is the unique element which can give such a strength to the human spirit and so expand the area of its activity as to prepare it to face the hardest and most complex of problems without giving in or cowering. The person imbued with faith knows that hardships, no matter how severe, will not stand in front of his undefeatable spirit and will be overcome.

The strength to bear hardship and adversity saves man from certain psychic illnesses. It is the power of faith which definitely increases a person's capacity for forbearance without affecting his mental equilibrium and his steadiness on the path to his goal. The Prophet of Islam (S) considers this merit as one of the characteristics of godly men:

The man of faith is like a gold bullion. If placed in the furnace it grows red hot and when it is weighed afterwards its weight is not diminished in the least.(۲)

'Ali, may peace be upon him, said:

The spirit of a person possessing faith is more resistant than

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۱- William John Reily, Twelve Ways for Straight Thinking, pp. ۱۰۳-۵.

۲- Nahj al fasahah, p. ۵۶۴.

(the hardest stone.(1)

:Mann, in the Principles of Psychology, writes

When our efforts in attaining a goal meet an obstacle which is difficult or impossible for us to overcome, it produces in us the feeling of frustration. The obstacles causing frustration can be external objects in our environment, other persons, our own personal inadequacies, or our incapacity in resolving our inner conflicts. The degree of tolerance for failure differs in individuals. The encounter with a certain degree of failure can produce mental breakdown in some people, while others can easily bear the same kind of failure. Some who have a low level of resistance can lose their poise in confrontation with failure and do something which may lake them further away (from their goal.(2)

Concealing One's Weaknesses

Self-deception aimed to avoid action or inventing pretexts for the inability to perform certain tasks due to a personal weakness have a psychic cause. One who does not manifest stability and perseverance in any matter leaves everything that he takes up incomplete or avoids looking the problems of life in the face. He continually invents .excuses to conceal his spiritual inadequacy and deceives himself

:Ali, may peace be upon him, said'

When faced with intense hardship, at times a man may be led to lie to himself (and (thus deceive himself in order to escape responsibility).(3)

:Today, this matter has been scientifically proved. According to psychologists

When someone lacks the capacity to do a job, quits it and takes up another job, he justifies it by saying, "I think I can serve

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.al Majlisi, Bihar al Anwar, vol. ۱۵ p . ۹۴ -۱

۲- Mann, The Principles of Psychology, p. ۱۴۸.

۳- Ghurar al Hikam, p. ۵۳۷.

my country and a country men better in this profession." The truth is something else. He changed his profession since he did not have the capacity for that job. Men invent .reasons to justify their actions and try to make them appear proper and correct

Untrue justification, like any other defensive action, is either a sign of failure or an indication that one has not learnt the way to confront problems. Persons with obvious shortcomings take recourse in unrealistic reasoning. That which they must do is to recognise their defects and try to remove them. When we face a defeat, our unconscious preserves the feeling of frustration and despair and prompts us to engage in unrealistic reasoning. I he better thing to do is to admit one's despair and deprivation and try to strengthen oneself for overcoming problems. We should forget the defeat which was a result of lack of sufficient effort and remember to use our .experience of defeat for future occasions

Escapism and fleeing difficulties and problems is a wrong remedy. This trick works only for a short time, and the pain, sickness and weakness soon return. While reacting in regard to a problem, one must ask oneself the question: "Am I deceiving myself and others? Am I trying to justify myself? What should I do in order to solve my problem by being honest to myself?" It is of course not sufficient to give expression to the problem. Rather one should take effective steps and give one's time for

its solution. One should refrain from putting it off with excuses. Unrealistic justification is undesirable for it is an unconscious effort at deceiving oneself and others. One must face the reality distinguish the true and the false and try to solve the difficulty.(1)

One should not allow oneself to be overcome by despair and the shattering loss of hope in the most critical and difficult circumstances. 'Ali the Commander of the Faithful may peace be upon him advises that one should not give up hope and try to escape problems in the most difficult and complex of situations. He says:

The hope of relief comes at the peak of adversely (that is one should be optimistic and hopeful even at the peak of hardship and adversity) and relief comes when the noose of adversely has reached its tightest point.(2)

Fortitude in the face of hardship is one of the things taught by the God-sent prophets for the training of the human spirit. Once one of the prophets of God was told that an old woman was at death's door due to a tragedy that had befallen her. Her only son who was a worthy and gifted man had died. The prophet was told that it behoved a prophet to attempt to console her with kind words and try to pacify her grief by exhorting her. The prophet went to see her. Entering her house he looked around and saw a number of pigeons who had made their nest in a corner of the

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۱- Marguerite Malm and Herbert Soresnon, Psychology for Living, pp. ۱۹۱.

۲- Nahj al Balaghah, p. ۳۵۱ and ۵۳۶.

house. "Have these pigeons hatched any chickens in your house?" he asked her. "Yes they have" she replied. "Do all of them grow up to become old?" he asked her. She replied "Sometimes I kill some of them and make use of their meat." "Do you do that in front of their mother?" he asked. "Yes" she replied. The prophet said "Then do they .stop being friendly towards you and desert you?" "Never" she answered

There at the prophet said to her "O woman! Be careful lest you should prove to be lesser than these pigeons in your attitude towards God and His will. You kill their young ones in front of their eyes yet they don't abandon your house and do not leave you although what you do is only of benefit for yourself and there is no benefit in it for ".them. But when God took away your son his death was for his and your benefit

On hearing these words there was a sudden change in the old woman and a revolution occurred within her spirit. She fell in prostration before God and began .pleading for pardon. The burden of grief and sorrow was at once lifted from her heart

What power except the power of faith can help heal a wounded and bereaved heart ?with a few words and give it undesirable comfort

Steadiness in Friendship

Steadiness in friendship and love is another virtue that should be cultivated by every Muslim. The Prophet of Islam has commanded his followers to be steady in

their relations of love and friendship with one another. In one of his statements he :says

Verily God loves Muslims to be steady in friendship and to be loyal to their old friends (taking care to observe the demands of friendship love and loyalty.(۱)

:Dr. Aveberry says in this regard

Much certainty of the happiness and purity of our lives depends on our making a wise choice of our companions and friends. If badly chosen they will inevitably drag us down if well they will raise us up ...

Yet how often we know merely the sight of those we call our friends or the sound of their voices hut nothing whatever of their mind or soul.

We must moreover he as careful to keep friends as to make them ... And when you have made a friend keep him. "Cherish an old friend" says an Eastern proverb "visit him often for thorns and brushwood obstruct the road which no one treads." The affections should not he mere "tents of a night" ... Death indeed cannot sever friendship. "Friends" says Cicero "though absent are still present; though in poverty they are rich; though weak yet in enjoyment of health; and what is still more difficult to assert though dead they arc alive." This seems a paradox yet is there not much truth in his explanation? "To me indeed Scipio still lives and will always live; for I love the virtue of that man and that worth is not yet extinguished ... Assuredly of all things

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.Nahj al Fasahah, p. ۱۵۲ -۱

that either fortune or time has bestowed on me I have none which I can compare with ".the friendship of Scipio

If then we choose our friends for what they are not for what they have and if we deserve so great a blessing then they will be always with us preserved in absence and (even after death in the amber of memory.(١

Chapter ٩: The Psychological Needs

point

Besides his basic physical needs, the human being also possesses a series of psychological needs whose powerful and decisive pressure for satisfaction is so obvious and evident as to be beyond question. If anyone of these needs is not met properly and in a timely manner, it leaves the path of moderation, leading to disruption in the life of the individual and the community and giving rise to painful .disorders difficult to remedy

The scope of man's spiritual needs, contrary to his material needs, is extensive and unlimited, and that is why these urges cannot be easily confined within limits. Although scientific research concerning psychological needs is of recent origin, these .needs themselves are not new and are as ancient as man himself

All individuals do not stand at the same level in respect of their psychological makeup, and it is the non-uniformity of this makeup that makes them different from one another in respect of their ways of thinking, feeling and behaving. No doubt the role of these factors in the success and failure of individuals is much greater than the .differences occasioned by social conventions

One of the

.Lord Avebury, The Pleasure of Life, pp. ٩٩, ١٠۵-۶ -١

basic psychological needs, which is a consequent of man's love of perfection, is his urge to seek honour and respectability. Many of his activities are directed to achieving this purpose, for man cherishes honour and dignity to the same extent that he resents and avoids indignity and dishonour. At times when his honour and position are in jeopardy, he employs all his powers and means to avert this danger and does his utmost to avoid such a crisis. The sense of failure and the anguish felt at the aspect of dishonour are much more unpleasant than the defeat and inadequacy itself and often .turn life into a dilemma or a frightsome nightmare

The feeling of humiliation creates a terrible storm in some sensitive souls. The world assumes a menacing and absurd countenance in their eyes, and in order to escape its terror and torment they may even be led to take refuge in the dark valley of suicide. However, in this way in order to get rid of a small setback they surrender to the .biggest disgrace and humiliation

In setbacks that reduce man into a wretched and despondent creature, one should try to find a proper and wholesome way of confronting the situation. The rational way is to channel one's capacities in a proper direction and affirm one's personal worth by pursuing a course of action for which one has a special talent. In this way one can restore emotional balance and recover one's lost personal equilibrium. By compensating for one's

.inadequacies one can build a life of highest self-respect and self-reliance

The urge for self-respect, which has been implanted in human nature by the Creator, starts manifesting itself in various forms right from infancy and earlier than other spiritual qualities. The sensitive heart of a child needs love and affection and is eager to receive attention. By nature he expects to receive the maximum attention from those around him and cannot bear to share it with someone else. When another baby is born in the family and receives the greater part of the mother's attention, she cannot find the time to give the attention she gave earlier to her elder child. The latter reacts violently to the presence of the newcomer and views him with resentment and consternation. If the child feels deprived, wronged and unwanted, he may come to harbour a chronic feeling of acute jealousy and envy that manifest as deviant conduct, making him prone to misguidance and deception. There are many children who come to acquire such complexes that make them face many problems in later .life

The rise and fall of nations and their honour or humiliation depends on their spiritual state and qualities, which ultimately depend on their ways of thinking and behaving. Such personal qualities as spiritual merit and pure sentiments are not by any means comparable to other advantages that one may acquire through life such as wealth and social status. It is a fact that the inner causes play a greater role in creating

real honour than outward means, for real honour and happiness and dishonour and wretchedness are subject to inner life, although unthinking persons consider the differences of social status as the real factor behind the diverse degrees of .respectability

False Advantages and Distinctions

There are many people in society who make a mistake in identifying the factors that bring respectability. Since their psychological need is not fulfilled through the right means, they resort to deviant and destructive ways to satisfy this urge. Like a drowning man who tries to catch hold of every object in order to save himself, they do not leave any stone unturned in order to earn false distinctions and fake respectability .and take recourse in every insignificant means

For instance, in some persons the appeal of unlimited wealth and innumerable assets may emerge as an urgent need and thirst. This urge, like an inner tyrant, can overshadow their faculty of reason, their sense of justice and awareness of their true interests. Such an unwholesome state turns man into a most tormented and helpless creature who tortures himself in addition to being harmful to others. If the number of such persons were to increase in a community and were they to become a majority, .such a society would be in deep trouble

The problem is that possessing wealth in excess of one's needs is usually accompanied by one of these characteristics, each of which by itself leads man into misfortune and wretchedness. Either it makes one deviate from the straight path of moderation to indulge

in the pursuit of one's desires, or makes one so madly in love with riches that wealth becomes for him an idol and object of worship, on whose altar he is ready to sacrifice everything. Of course, this does not mean that one should not try to obtain wealth and provide for the needs of one's life. But it is a fact that a wealth in excess of one's .needs does not affect one's felicity in the least

Nevertheless, such a feeling in a person is not the basic goal of any psychological need, nor does it guarantee his welfare. The cause of most psychological disorders in people is excessive attention to this one-sided urge, which is far removed from the .very notion of spiritual need and its real satisfaction

Obviously, improper goals cannot be expected to yield worthy and satisfactory results. Inner anguish and dissatisfaction is the logical result of choosing unreasonable and inappropriate goals. Thus we come across countless people who are rich but who have no sense of personal honour and dignity due to their being devoid of spiritual values. They remain defenceless, perplexed and forlorn in the midst of roaring waves of the sea of life, and ultimately their life ends in the same state of defencelessness and forlornness when everything comes to an end with .them

Inner dignity is a refreshing feeling that arises from the depths of one's soul and pervades everything. One who has inner dignity will also enjoy society's respect and honour. True, may people

have the desire in their hearts to obtain the highest degrees of honour and wish to shine like stars on the horizon of their community and to impress others with their personal glory and fortunes. They wish that their name be on people's lips and their picture in their hearts. However, in order to attain such a goal one must be realistic .and base his life on the foundations of true dignity

:A Western thinker says

Wealth is not money alone. There are many people with apparently meagre means of .life, but if we look carefully we would have to count them amongst the richest of men

Self respect, personal dignity and other human virtues constitute a spiritual asset safe from the hands of any thief. There are many people who possess these qualities but lack material riches and who command the respect of wealthy people. Money can be acquired with toil and perseverance. How about honour and dignity? These are things .which money cannot buy

I don't know why people ignore the truth and attach so much worth to wealth that undaunted by any danger they run after it, eagerly exposing their life to all sorts of perils. They squander their bodily health and lose their peace of mind and spend a significant part of their lives in toil and drudgery in order to become rich. Alas! For .heaps of gold are not worth a minute of human life

People imagine that wealth can bring them happiness and with it they can restore the

lost paradise forever to their lives. They do not know that money cannot buy happiness. Poor folk! The more they advance in its search the farther they recede from themselves and ultimately get lost in its labyrinths. They betray their own souls, their feelings and merits. Neither money is necessary for happiness nor wealth. That which is essential consists of things which are neglected by most people, and one does not see a single one amongst the seekers of happiness who should be in their (quest.(١

When Alexander, the famous Macedonian conqueror was appointed the army's chief commander at the time of the Persian campaign, people from all the various classes came to congratulate him. Diogenes, the well-known Greek sage, who lived in Cornith at the time, did not pay him any attention. Alexander wanted to meet him personally and so he went to see him. Diogenes, who was a self-respecting man, a free soul indifferent to worldly glamour and riches-and these were his prominent qualities-was lying in a tub enjoying the warmth of the sun. When he sensed that a crowd of people was approaching him, he rose his head a little and his eyes fell on Alexander who was coming towards him amidst pomp and glory. As he reposed with indifferent equanimity, he did not see any difference between Alexander and others who were coming with him. Alexander greeted him reverently and said to him, "If you have any wish, I assure you that will not be disappointed." Diogenes

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١- John Lubbock Baron Aveberry, On Peace and Happiness, Persian trans. by Mehrdad Mehrin, "Dar justotu-e khushbakhti" p. ۱۴۶.

said to him, "I have only one request. Until a moment ago I was enjoying the sun and ".you came and stood in the way of sunlight. Please move a little aside

Alexander's companions considered these words as foolish. They said to themselves, "Truly, this man is a fool who misses such a golden opportunity." However, Alexander, who felt small in front of what he had observed of Diogenes' dignity and resignation, was deeply shaken. As he returned with his companions, who ridiculed the philosopher's conduct, he said to them, "If I weren't Alexander, I would have liked to)be Diogenes."(۱

At all times there are some people who, ruled as their emotions and acts are by an unhealthy spirit, cannot tolerate the noble station of others. Accordingly, in their encounter with great men they try to project themselves as at least their equals if not their superiors. And since they are devoid of the. characteristics of greatness, they try with different means to belittle great men and to block the light of their radiance. However, they never succeed in detracting from the worth of outstanding personalities by their subversive efforts. That is because men of honour and dignity belong to all humanity. The distances of space and time disappear in front of them and their memory leaves an indelible impression in human souls and the star of their .greatness and honour acquires even greater brilliance with the passage of time

The sense of person honour can be helpful in moderating and

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۱ - George Sarton, A History of Science, vol. ۱ (Cambridge: Harvard University .Press, ۱۹۵۲), Persian trans. "Ta'rikh-e 'ilm" p. ۵۲۵

controlling undesirable infatuations and desires. There may be some who might not have sufficient moral competence and may even exhibit deviant tendencies, yet their sense of self-respect and personal honour prevents them perpetrating from immoral and undesirable actions. This innate asset results in saving them from dishonourable .actions

Honour, from the Islamic Viewpoint

Rising above the animal plane to the higher levels is something which is possible for everyone. That is because the desire to attain perfection is innate in human nature, and this inclination is deeply rooted in the human soul. But, it definitely stands in need of guidance and care. However, one does not need to be forcefully dragged in order to traverse the downward course of degeneration, because one's base inclinations .automatically lead one down the steep path of moral decline

The real development of man occurs when he has released himself from the grip of base animal desires to become acquainted with the expansive horizon of sublime thoughts. Thus the human being can fall to the low level of a beast, while possessing at the same time the capacity to cast away destructive motives before they become .potent and to make the angelic ascent towards the higher world

The harmony created by Islam between inward and outward factors in the sphere of spiritual development led to a conspicuous success, and throughout history there emerged many individuals who attained through perseverance the high station .worthy of their humanity

From the viewpoint of Islam, everyone's worth and station depend on the extent he partakes of the higher

values. Otherwise one would not be worthy of being called a 'human being' in its real sense, and there is no criterion of personal honour and nobility except piety and God-fearing, other outward advantages being insignificant in this respect.

Imam 'Ali, may peace be upon him, said:

There is no honour greater than personal piety.

And the revered Prophet of Islam, may God bless him and his Household, declared:

Whoever desires to be the most honourable of men, let him be wary of God, the Almighty and the Glorious.(۱)

From the first moment that the light of God-wariness shines into the heart of a human being possessing faith, he becomes conscious of its worth and significance. It is by virtue of this awareness and his far-reaching vision that he does not seek honour and merit in power and possessions, race and descent. Rather, he evaluates his own personal worth with the criterion of faith and conviction-a power that is truly and definitely effective in this world-and the merits that he has cultivated within. He feels himself to be superior to persons who are devoid of God-fearing and refrains from any kind of humiliating humility. That is because humility and modesty are proper only before God, Who created all the existents and the world of being with His Will, and human beings are His real servants. Basically, humility in front of the unequalled Creator of the world is itself the greatest source of human honour and dignity. The superiority and precedence attained by the pious

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۱- Al-Majlisi, Bihar al-anwar, vol. ۱۷, p. ۴۸.

human being through his relation with the real Source of the world inalienably accompanies him in all phases and situations of life. The light of piety and the purity of soul is so luminous and attractive that others also sense that there is something firm and enduring embedded within the spirit of such a person, which is not hollow or capable of being vanquished by a simple collision. The vital force that lies within a pious person keeps him aware of the realities of life and he never gets swallowed up by the deep and shoreless sea of mundane things for the sake of enjoying life. That is because his intellect and soul are infused with the truths of Islam and he views everything in the perspective of an Islamic world view. False values are never equated with real values in his realistic evaluation, and it is not possible for base motives to capture his mind and perceptive faculties and to invade his undefeatable .spirit

He courageously resists temptations and illusory desires, for he has understood that no matter how important and precious some things should appear to be, they are insignificant and worthless before God's greatness and majesty and his own higher feelings. With all their abundance they are after all transitory and passing. The Qur'an :says

That is, 'Do not view with eager eyes the insignificant things that a certain group or community may have been given to enjoy by Us, for the sake of a test, as a manifestation

of the transitory life of the world, for your sustenance and provision, which is with (your Lord, is much superior and enduring.' (۲۰:۱۳۱

Islam attaches so much value to the affairs of the faithful that their station of honour :is mentioned along with the majesty of God and His Messenger

(Yet honour belongs unto God, and unto His Messenger and the believers . (۶۳:۸

Refraining from Humiliation

There are many traditions from the honoured sages of Islam about personal honour and its ethical and social value, and they themselves have practically given this great lesson to the people. Husayn ibn 'Ali, the Leader of free men, may peace be upon him, was once asked as to wherein one's honour lay. He said that it lay in the absence of :reliance on others

The Noble Messenger, may God bless him and his Household, points out the same :fact in this statement

The absence of need does not lie in the abundance of wealth but it lies in inner (plenitude.(۱

:A writer says

Imagine for a moment the richest of men lying in his sick bed and picture his condition in your mind. Wait until his fever rises to a feverish degree burning his body all over. Then cover his bed sheet with a thousand fistfuls of gold and silver and put him in a bed draped in soft silk. If this treasure and adornment can ameliorate his helpless and desperate condition, then you can claim that riches are effective in bringing one happiness. If wealth cannot effect physical well-being, how is

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.Nahj al-fasahah, p. ۵۰۴ -۱

it possible for it to rescue the soul from suffering and grief and bring it joy and (happiness?(١

:Dr. Marden writes

If the edifice of our happiness were to be built on material means, it would soon fall and turn into a ruin. That is because the material world is transitory and subject to change, and all its means are fleeting like flashes of lightning, unenduring like vapour and unstable like fire. It is evident how much one can depend on such fleeting and .passing means

One who seeks joy and comfort through material means is like one who goes to sleep on an iceberg in a tempestuous sea, heedless of the world around him. Soon the .iceberg melts and the poor man slips into the arms of its angry waves

Wealth is a means to remove need, not the asset of felicity. That which make us happy is the soul's comfort, and here material means have no role. Do not imagine that I wish to underrate the importance of wealth, for it can be an aid to achieving .inner comfort if accompanied by wisdom and moderation

It is certain that excess in the pursuit of material means leads to a spiritual imbalance. Soon our souls are invaded by envy, hostility, and violence which are an essential part of a materialistic attitude. We need moderation in order to be happy and to be constantly watchful of ourselves so as not to deviate towards either extremes on the .path of life

We have read in religious stories

Jagot, Paul Clement, Theories et procedes de l'hypnotisme cours d'entrainement -١ experimental, Persian trans. "Talqin beh nafs" by Mahmad Nawa'i (Tehran ١٣۶٢ H. Sh.), .p. ١٩

that in the other world the sinners will pass over a path 'which is hotter than fire, sharper than a sword's edge, and thinner than a hair.' Such is the path of life, as it is finer than a hair and a moment of neglect makes us deviate from it. It is sharper than a sword's edge and we are done with if we are not careful. It consumes like fire and a moment of carelessness is enough to make its sparks set the harvest of our being afire.

If you wish to be happy, do not be unruly and avaricious like fire. Happiness does not harmonise with greed and avarice. The greedy nature is like a disturbed sea and wretched is the man who pins his hopes of peace and tranquillity on a storm.(۱)

One of the most important duties of every Muslim interested in his own welfare and desirous of liberating himself from inner bondages is to abstain from every indignity and humiliation. The leaders of Islam have always exhorted people to refrain from pursuing mean goals which do not accord with the real dignity of a Muslim. The Eleventh Imam, may peace be upon him, said:

How ugly it is for a person of faith to cherish something that would lead him into humiliation!(۲)

One must not pay excessive attention to things of little value in life, becoming so infatuated with them as if there were nothing to be desired beyond them. Such a condition leads to mental degeneration, also subjecting

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۱- Marden, Orison Swett, Persian trans. Asrar-e nikbakhti, pp. ۹۸-۱۰۱.

۲- Al-Harrani, Tuhaf al-'uqul, p. ۴۸۹.

one's emotional being to the degrading influence of insignificant matters which never arise for a moment above their low and limited terrestrial level, and moreover erode the significance of one's humanity. Imam 'Ali, may peace be upon whom, said:

(Hold your own personal worth high by indifference to lowly things and base goals.(۱)

Some people are so possessed with the passion for mundane pursuits that they severely compromise their personal honour and dignity in order to achieve materialistic ends and submit to every humiliation and disgrace. In their pursuit of mundane profit, they approach everyone with whom they come into contact with a feeling of inner need. They adopt peculiar tactics in life and social intercourse and go to extremes in implementing their plans. They become used to being obsequious and saying things which do not have any meaning beyond expressing personal humiliation and abasement. Such an approach in life reflects the corruption and abasement that have settled on their inner spirit and have run deep roots therein. Imam 'Ali, may peace be upon him, said:

(An hour of humiliation is not effaced by ages of honour.(۲)

Emerson says:

Experienced men of the world know very well that it is best to pay scot and lot as they go along, and that a man often pays dear for a small frugality. The borrower runs in his own debt. Has a man gained anything who has received a hundred favours and rendered none? Has he gained by borrowing, through indolence or cunning, his neighbour's wares, or

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۱- Ibid., p. ۲۲۴.

۲- Al-Amidi, Ghurar al-hikam, p. ۴۳۴.

horses, or money? There arises on the deed the instant acknowledgement of benefit on the one part and of debt on the other; this is, of superiority and inferiority. The transaction remains in the memory of himself and of his neighbour; and every new transaction alters according to its nature their relation to each other. He may soon come to see that he had better have broken his own bones than to have ridden in his neighbour's coach, and that "the highest price he can pay for a thing is to ask for it."(۱)

The Spirit of Self-Reliance

Self-reliance and high-mindedness are qualities of those who have truly perceived their human worth. If a Muslim inspired by the invaluable teachings of Islam faces a financial crisis, he would continue to endure this unhappy, and occasionally paralysing, condition, but he would never yield to humiliation and abjectness.

Although Islam lays abundant emphasis on effort and activity for earning a legitimate income so that one lives with a head held high, at the same time it warns people from aggravated greed which leads to the slavery of wealth. That is because the bondage of wealth and riches is as much a source of self-abasement and erosion of one's human dignity as dependence and reliance an others.

Imam 'Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, may peace be upon him, makes the following remark concerning the humiliation that results in both the cases.

Dependence on others and appealing for help impairs the speaker's tongue and vitiates the mind of the courageous

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۱- Emerson, "Compensation," cf. Commins Linscott, The Social Philosophers (New York: Modern Pocket Library ۱۹۵۴), p. ۴۴۸.

and the heroic, and degrades a free human being to the level of an abject slave, (besides tarnishing one's dignity and spoiling one's livelihood.(١)

(How often richness is more degrading than deprivation!(٢)

How often there are poor people who are actually rich, and how often there are rich (people who are in fact impoverished and wretched.(٣)

The Noble Qur'an describes the people who are without means but dignified in these :words

The ignorant (who are misled by their dignified appearance) suppose them rich because of their abstinence (from asking others for help), but thou shalt know them (from their faces; they do not beg of men importunately. (٢:٢٧٣

:Imam Sajjad, may peace be upon him, said

(I would not exchange my self-respect for the most precious thing in the world.(۴)

Islam considers the expression of gratitude and appreciation as a desirable and outstanding virtue, but it does not permit that one should resort to flattery in the garb of appreciation of others. No Muslim has a right to contaminate himself with a flattery .contrary to the dignity and freedom of his self

The basic condition for expressing gratitude is the spiritual independence and inner satisfaction of one who expresses gratitude and fulfils his human duty when required to do so. However, some people who suffer from moral inadequacy and inner weakness try to conceal their inner abjectness and self- contempt with humiliating and obsequious expressions of admiration. Without doubt, such a condition, which is a reaction prompted by spiritual weakness and is an evidence of inner degradation, does

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.Al-Amidi Ghurar al-hikam, p. ٩٨ -١

۲- Ibid., p. ۴۱۴.

۳- Ibid ., p. ۵۵۲.

۴- Al-Nari, Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, vol. ۲, p. ۳۶۴.

.not possess any kind of ethical or educative value

Imam 'Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, may peace be upon him, makes it explicit in one of his aphorisms that an appreciation mixed with flattery has two harmful and undesirable results; on the one hand it tarnishes the self-respect of the flattering :person and on the other causes the other person to be afflicted with the vice of pride

Excessive praise amounts to flattery, which, on the one hand, causes pride and haughtiness in the addressee and deprives the flatterer of his personal honour on the (other.(۱

Persons of a noble temperament do not lose themselves regardless of the status and fame they might attain, while persons wanting in self-respect are swept off their feet .at the smallest success in attaining status and position

:Imam 'Ali, may peace be upon him, makes this point in an interesting manner

An honourable person does not act like an insolent ingratiate no matter how high the position he may attain to, being like a mountain that remains unmoved by the gales. But a base person rises to insolence and ungratefulness on attaining the meanest (position, like a plant that is shaken to its roots by the softest draft of wind.(۲

Foresight

Everyone must weigh the consequences before deciding to do something and he must always take his own self-respect and personal honour into consideration. Those whose intellects are extinguished and whose spirits are dark submit to every kind of ignominy and slavery for the sake of the meanest of goals

p: ۲۷۹

۱- Al-Amidi, Ghurar al-hikam, p. ۵۶۳.

۲- Ibid., p. ۴۰۷.

and they do not refrain from anything in order to attain their petty goals. But are such ?goals worthy of an honourable human being

Once a man requested the Noble Messenger, may God bless him and his Household, to give him counsel. The Prophet accepted his request but asked him, `Do you promise to be careful to act according to my advice?" "Yes, I promise," he replied. Thrice the Prophet put this question to him, and after taking his pledge and drawing his full attention to the importance of the matter, he told him: `Whenever you decide to do something, think about its consequences and reflect over the matter. If its consequences appear to be good and proper, pursue it until you get results. But if the consequences appear to be devious and destructive, refrain from carrying out your decision and from performing that act." A European scholar writes

One should carefully examine the pros and cons of an action before it is carried out, to see whether the desired goal is worth the effort and sacrifice. Views and opinions differ in this regard, and everyone considers one's goals as better and superior to those of others, and as Marcus says, "The spider is as happy to catch a fly as a hunter ".to capture a deer in the desert

Accordingly, everyone has his own goals. Fame should be accompanied by honour, otherwise by itself it is of no use. In bygone days there were some persons who were as famous for being

scoundrels as much as the sun is known for its light and the fire for its heat. But what did they get out of this fame except curses and denunciation?(۱)

The great men who spent their lives in propagating justice and human merit and for the advancement of civilisation are immortal, and time cannot diminish their greatness. This kind of persons transcend space and time by virtue of their brilliant deeds. In all ages and eras their name is on the tongues of men and their memory is inscribed in their hearts and the repute of their greatness reaches new heights every day.

History has nothing to do with the bodies of famous men, but it preserves their spirit in the amber of their beneficial deeds. Men of deeds have a will, sublime like the mountain peaks and a spirit as great as the ocean. Their determination overtakes everything in its stride and their spirit encompasses everything. They do not know despair and give no significance to defeat and, aside from all this, they have a perspicacity of mind. They recognise opportunities when they arise and know how to use them, for opportunity is like a wild deer which does not return once it is lost.(۲)

True Freedom

The human being is the highest and the most developed of creatures on the surface of the earth. With positive power, effort, and will the human being can grow in all its various dimensions. But if a person concentrates all his energy and effort on the pursuit

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۱- Al-Hurr al-'Amili, Wasail al-Shi'ah, vol. ۲, p. ۴۵۷.

۲- John Lubbock Baron Aveberry, Persian trans by Abul Qasim Payendeh, Dar aghosh-e khushbakhti, pp. ۱۱۴-۱۱۵.

of base goals and devotes all his power to such matters, how can he realise his true ?human potential

The selection of improper goals and their pursuit gradually depletes one's stores of energy, not leaving any sufficient power for the heavenward journey. In that case, the soul begins to stall and incline towards degeneration. Gradually its faculties of consciousness and awareness reach such a low point that it resists any obstacle in the .way of its worthless goals and insists on pursuing its self-destructive course

The developed self which has attained to a degree of humanity possess a characteristic freedom. One who possesses true freedom neither debases himself nor tarnishes his human dignity. He feels life to possess higher goals which are more worthy of being realised than anything else. Desires cannot dominate such a person's will and drive him in any direction they want. Rather, he is in control of his desires and, at the same time, his vital and vivid capacities correctly fulfil their original duties in all .the spheres of life

The worthy human being has a pure soul, a great will, and a sublime goal. The position and station of every individual should be assessed by this criterion: the greater his will, .the higher would be the degree of his human personality

:Imam 'Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, may peace be upon him, said

(A person's worth is proportional to his determination(۱)

The proper thing for someone who has discovered his human dignity is to keep himself at bay from

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.Al-Amidi, Ghurar al-hikam, p. ۵۳۶ -۱

(life's abasements and contaminations.(١

Aligning Goals with Capacities

While choosing one's goals, one should keep in view one's power, potential, and capacities and refrain from being unreasonably ambitious, for that would lead to .failure and disappointment

Imam 'Ali, the Master of the Pious, may peace be upon him, makes this interesting :remark

(Whoever asks for something beyond his limits deserves disappointment.(٢

(Whoever demands something he does not deserve will face Disappointment.(٣

Psychologists describe ambitious goals that are not consonant with a person's :capabilities as one of the causes of failure

The causes of failure lie either within the person himself or in the environment or both. The internal conditions of failure relate to mental and physical ability and health. The other internal conditions consist of personal goals and ambitions. Individuals differ in their capacity to face obstacles. Many people cannot succeed in overcoming their problems due to inadequate capacity. The causes of failure lie within the person himself when he expects more in order to fulfil his needs than he has the capacity to procure. For instance, Ahmad is a healthy young man and an athlete. He takes part in most of the sports at his college and is someone who can make many friends and enjoy their company. However, he is always sad and depressed. Ahmad thinks that people do not appreciate him as much they as should, that he did not get the medals that were received by others, that the newspapers do not print his pictures on the first pages, and things of this

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١- Ibid., p. ٨۶٠.

٢- Ibid., p. ۶۶۵.

۳- Ibid., p. ۶۶۲.

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Ahmad's expectations are more than what his abilities would permit. His problem is a product of his own thinking, and it is something commonly observed in individuals, especially young people. If we observe carefully, we would see that many people are not satisfied with their work and their expectations are greater than their abilities .would warrant

Those who have too many expectations from the world are never at peace or happy. If their personal capacities were enough to fulfil their expectations, these expectations would definitely be realised. But the main problem is that expectations often exceed capacity. We have been taught that one can achieve whatever one wants, but we have not been told that this is true when one has the necessary capacity and power. Of course, effort is necessary at all times. Defeat must not stop one from making effort, and everybody must struggle to reach his goal. But goals (must be chosen in accordance with one's capacities.(۱

Humiliation and Sin

Of the things that severely affect one's sense of personal dignity is vice and commission of sin. One who violates laws and perpetrates actions that are contrary to human honour and merit, will be haunted with a feeling of abjectness and degradation. The sense of shame and guilt continually haunts the sinner as a result of his sinful deeds severely affecting his sense of self- respect and personal dignity. Those who are masters of their desires and in control of their urges restrain themselves from falling into error and corruption and

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۱ - Margguerite Malm Herbert Sorenson, Psychology f or Living, Persian trans. by Mahdi Jalali, Rawanshendsl baraye zistan (Tehran: Amir Kabir Publications ۱۳۴۸ H. Sh.), pp. ۳۳۷-۳۳۹

do not approach sin. They have a characteristic sense of personal dignity and mental peace. But such people are a minority in every society, while the majority of people get more or less contaminated with vice in the course of life, and sin casts of its dark .shadow on the tablet of their heart

However, in the same way that physical diseases are capable of treatment, the human spirit and soul is also curable when affected by inner disease. Islam has shown the way of treating this kind of maladies, opening the way of return to health, virtue, and felicity through the means of repentance, and giving the good news of Divine .mercy to the penitent

The Divine emissaries, whose lives were totally free from the traces of sin, have always inspired in the sinners hopes of the Creator's mercy and pardon in order to deliver them from degeneration and wretchedness and to save them. Through penitence before God and repentance for sins they sought to rescue the sinners from the dangerous spiritual repercussions of inner anguish. Thus by refraining from vices and trying to compensate for their past errors they can efface the remarks of transgression to the extent possible. As a result of it they are freed from self-blame and the anguish of a guilty conscience. That is because the continual feeling of sinfulness is extremely painful and debilitating, and despair from purging of the soul of sin and loss of hope in Divine forgiveness bring irremediable harms as well

as many dangers for the victim of vice and the society in which he lives. A human being who values his own personal dignity and felicity should immediately implore God's pardon as soon he falls into sin as a result of carnal urges and feels the burden of sin on his shoulders and the guilt of violating the Lord's commands. By attending to the great station of God, he should ask for pardon and forgiveness. The Qur'an :considers this characteristic as a merit of the God-wary

The believers are those] who, when they commit an indecency or wrong themselves,] remember God, and pray for forgiveness for their sins and who forgives sins but God? (and do not knowingly persevere in the things they did. (۳:۱۳۵

But one who becomes addicted to sin due to its repetition and is enveloped in the darkness of sinfulness does not feel that he is doing something evil or have any scruples. He continues to advance on the filthy path until the moment that the agony of death seizes him. He is neglectful of the great station of his Lord as well as forgetful of his own state. He is devoid of this virtue of the God-wary, and his repentance (at .the encounter with death) is not accepted

Imam 'Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, may peace be upon him, considers refraining from contamination with sins as one of the factors that lead to the :attainment of personal honour and dignity

One who believes in his personal dignity and

(honour does not debase himself with sin and vice.(1)

(If you desire to attain honour, seek it through obedience (to God).(2)

The confession of guilt and the imploring of pardon and forgiveness from God removes the dark stains of sin from one's dignity and recovers one's lost tranquillity of the soul.

Imam Baqir, may peace be upon him, said:

(By God, none is relieved of sin except one who confesses his guilt.(3)

Confession of guilt and compensating for past misconduct are also considered among the most essential means of relief from the painful pangs of guilt by psychologists, one of whom says:

When someone commits a wrong, he has a feeling of guilt. In such cases, a mild form of anxiety takes hold of us. Such a feeling is quite proper and appropriate, because it produces a feeling of shame in regard to the mistake that we have committed and restrains us from committing it again in the future. When someone feels guilty, it is better to consult an elderly and experienced person who is wise and objective. One should do that in order to get rid of this feeling, which is painful in many cases, and also to know to what extent the feeling of guilt is justified. By this method one would have relieved oneself of one's anxiety as well as sought advice and guidance.

Many people conceal their sense of guilt and in this way torture themselves, a punishment dealt out by the subconscious. That is why such a person is always in

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۱- Al-Amidi, Ghurar al-hikam, p. ۶۷۷.

۲- Ibid., p. ۳۱۴.

۳- Al-Kulayni, al-Kafi, vol. ۲, p. ۴۲۶.

a state of agitation. But the right way is not that the subconscious be prompted to deal out its punishment. The correct way is to confess one's mistake and find the way to (compensate for it.(1

It is here that repentance and confession of sin before God bring back one's lost peace, making one stronger to compensate for the past errors and to acquire spiritual .merit and edification

A Big Fault

One of the big moral faults is to constantly complain concerning the conditions of life and to discuss the problems and hardships of one's life with people. In this way one .detracts from one's personal worth, belittling oneself and compromising one's dignity

Mufaddal ibn Qays, one of the disciples of Imam Sadiq, may peace be upon him, was once in trouble due to financial problems and his failure to pay back his debts. One day, he went to see the Imam and began complaining about the conditions of his own life. He described his problem in these words: "I am in debt, and I do not know how to repay it. I have no income to meet my daily expenses. I am perplexed, reeling under the pressure of financial problems. To whatever door I turn, I find it closed upon me." Then he requested the Imam to pray for him so that God Almighty may solve his .difficulty

Imam Sadiq, may peace be upon him, called his servant and said to him, "Bring that bag of gold that was sent by Mansur." The bag was immediately

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.Margguerite Malm Herbert Sorenson op. cit pp. ۳۱۰-۳۱۱ -۱

brought. Then the Imam said to Mufaddal, "There are four hundred golden dinars in this bag. Use them to meet your expenses." Mufaddal said, "I did not mention my problems for this. I only wanted you to pray for me." The Imam replied, "Very well, I will also pray for you. But remember, do not discuss your personal problems and difficulties with people, for the very first effect it will have is to make it appear as if you have faced a defeat in life and have been knocked down. Obviously that will belittle you in people's eyes and harm your personal worth and dignity."(۱)

Imam 'Ali, may peace be upon him, said:

To disclose ones personal problems and difficulties for others is actually to expose oneself willingly to indignity.(۲)

Gillett Berghes writes:

Why do many people deliberately expose their failures and inadequacies and discusses them, while it is better to keep silent about them? They do so for several reasons, perhaps all of which are wrong and off the mark. Some people imagine that they would receive other people's applause and admiration and start complaining as a prelude. For some others, it is the result of their self-pity which has taken the form of a chronic illness with them. To say, 'I am at a loss! I don't know how to make ends meet until the end of the month,' indicates an inferiority complex.

Apart from the fact that refraining from discussing one's inadequacies and troubles has certain benefits, the very act of self-restraint

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۱- Al-Majlisi, Bihar al-anwar, vol. ۱۱, p. ۱۱۴.

۲- Al-Amidi, Ghurar al-hikam, p. ۴۲۲.

is effective in improving your moral character. In the same way that a closed boiling vessel produces high pressure steam, self-restraint also strengthens one and raises the degree of one's self-respect. A man who takes his defeat with a smile, a boy who suffers from a physical difficulty but who does not complain about it or fret over it-these face hardship with a stronger spirit and morale than those who have no control over their tongues and complain continually. Fortitude and self-reliance also (enhances their personal worth, wisdom, and influence.(١

Chapter ١٠: Exaggerated Opinion Of Oneself

point

The scope of the influence and activity of the subconscious mind is many time more powerful, complex, and deeper than those of the conscious mind. The discovery of the subconscious mind in psychology reveals that we are not aware of more than nine-tenths of our own inner mental activity. Besides what one desires consciously, there are some other very powerful urges that govern man's being and prompt him to do many things of which his conscious mind is unaware. Most of the times it is actually impossible for him not to comply with the commands of that inner power that rules .man

Many vicious and deviant tendencies and harmful habits are in fact manifestations of the vital activities of the unconscious mind. These bear testimony to the fiery character of the human spirit, replete with contradictions. It is through this channel that hidden motives in man's psychological structure work either to his benefit or to his harm. In Brief, subconscious

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From Kelidha-ye khushbakhti, trans. from English by Ahmad Aram (Tehran- - ١ .Shirkat-e Sahami-ye Intishar, ١٣٤٧ H Sh.), pp. ١٠١-١٠٢

desires, thoughts and motives can play a powerful role in a person's behaviour; they can perform both a formative and refining function as well as act as a destructive and .subversive force

Under certain conditions one may come to form an appealing picture of oneself in his mind. But this mental picture may not always correspond to reality. This picture of one's personality totally depends on one's capacity for adjustment, on one's condition of satisfaction or anxiety, mental health and sickness, and it manifests itself variously .in the behaviour and activity of persons

In every society there are many individuals who have an exaggerated opinion of themselves and who are inclined to be unrealistic and prone to overestimation in .regard to themselves. This is an undeniable fact of psychology

When the mind loses its balance and equilibrium as the mirror of reality, one's narcissistic tendencies result in the formation of an unreal and exaggerated image of oneself, easily leading one to lose contact with reality. These tendencies can develop from the childhood years. Before the child reaches the stage of self-awareness and is capable of consciously employing his power of will for the purpose of attaining to a better life, his mental constitution and world view, as well as his mental growth-healthy or unhealthy-and his self-image are greatly influenced by the reactions of his family and the suggestions and judgements of those around him. As a consequence, occasionally he grows either to be a self-indulgent person with high expectations and lacking the power

of adjusting to society and environment, or to become socially isolated and withdrawing. On the whole, different kinds of behaviour play an indescribably influential role on children, whether it is positive or negative, constructive or ..destructive

Many of those who appear to be composed, healthy, and resolute suffer from acute psychological tensions. At times these tensions may surface and manifest certain symptoms which may appear to be quite insignificant to the person himself or to others. That is why these reactions go unnoticed, although these symptoms might be signs of a dangerous pathological mental condition. It may happen that a person does something unexpected and unpredictable which causes surprise. Such actions are a clear sign of some strong inner tendency and a latent tyrannical power which takes control of a person's will, against his own inclination and interests, and influences his .conduct and character

Every action that is performed satisfies some urge arising from a habit, and habits are part of one's character and nature. Common experience has established that when a tendency becomes strong, it overrides other feelings and tendencies, making a person overlook all other considerations at such times. A proud person forms a perfect image of his conduct and speech in his mind, considering it to be something ideal and faultless that satisfies his superiority complex. He tries to direct all his activities and reactions according to that artificial and contrived image. He imagines his personal qualities and merits to be so high that he does not believe that

there exists any defect in his being. Therefore, he cannot tolerate hearing the smallest criticism. At times, if someone points out one of his shortcomings without any selfish motive and in a purely objective manner, he becomes angry and mad and accuses the other person of being hostile and malicious and of possessing guile and .invidious motives

Such painful occasions create a storm in the spirit of the proud person and he recoils violently in an acutely hostile manner to humiliate and shatter the critic and thus .pacify his disturbed feelings

A hidden and unconscious power constantly drives him on to prove his superiority over others, and that's why he does not abstain from any action that provides him with a chance to surpass others and to show off. Most of his associations and activities, even those which are socially useful, take place in the first place not because he has a love or liking for them as such but because he wants to be considered worthy and admirable and applauded on that account. He is always in a state of anxiety and painful tension lest others should fail to perceive him as he .wishes to be perceived

:Spinoza, the Western philosopher, says

Pride is a joy arising from a man's having too high an opinion of himself. this opinion a proud man will endeavour, as much as he can, to cherish, and therefore, will love the presence of parasites or flatterers (the definitions of these people are omitted, because they are too well

.known), and will shun that of the noble minded who think of him as is right

It would take too much time to enumerate here all the evils of pride, for the proud are subject to all emotions, but to none are they less subject than to those of love and pity. It is necessary, however, to observe here that a man is also called proud if he thinks too little of other people, and so, in this sense, pride is to be defined as joy which arises from the false opinion that we are superior to other people. This being understood, it is easy to see that the proud man is necessarily envious, and that he hates those above all others who are the most praised on account of their virtues. It follows, too, that his hatred of them is not easily overcome by love or kindness and that he is delighted by the presence of those only who humour his weakness, and (from a fool make him a madman.(۱

Often those who rise from the lower levels of society become proud and overbearing on obtaining some kind of social status. In this way they seek to compensate for the .self-contempt that they feel on account of their inadequate family background

However, noble souls are not satisfied with a petty and confined life. When one's goals are high, the scope of one's efforts and endeavour increase proportionately. When one ceases pursuing one's high goals, life stagnates, coming to a standstill due to

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.Spinoza, Ethics, cf. Persian trans. Falsafeh nazari, p. ۱۰۶ -۱

the absence of progress. Those who have higher aims strive unceasingly in order to build the edifice of their greatness on the foundations of true human merits and obtain a distinguished station. But they never like to make themselves appear great and worthy by taking recourse in pride and by promoting their personality, for they know well that pride does not bring greatness and merit to anyone. Men of merit are those who know themselves well and make constant progress in all their activities; they do not try to impress others with their imaginary greatness, expecting their .approbation and admiration

Wealth and Pride

Among the things which often make men proud and conceited is affluence. Those who fall prey to egotism in this way, due to their utter ignorance, view the poor with contempt and consider their existence as something superfluous and worthless, being oblivious of the fact that wealth is not limited to money and material assets. There are many people who live in conditions of material poverty but who must be counted among the richest of men by virtue of their genuine spiritual assets and merits. Often these individuals are held in honour and high esteem by rich people due to their spiritual plenitude. This is also entirely true of nations. A nation is richer which .has a greater number of great and wise men than other nations

Material wealth is incapable of procuring felicity and comfort. Most of the anxieties and miseries of people are a result of greed. There are many

persons who lack peace and comfort despite possessing enormous wealth. Moreover, property can even be a source of evil and affliction, darkening the heart of the rich with pride and landing them in vice, corruption, and sin, thus obliterating the .foundations of their happiness like a devastating flood

Material possessions make one of the prerequisites of comfort, not comfort itself. It may be said that the quest of wealth is like an endless chain; the wise person employs .it by subjecting it to his control, but the foolish man binds his neck with it

Some people think that they can obtain peace and security through affluence, but they do not know that the further one advances in the quest of wealth, the farther does he recede from his own self, losing his genuine human feelings in its mazes. It often happens that as soon as a person outstrips his friends in respect of financial welfare, pride and conceit lead him to sever the ties of friendship and attachment with .his comrades

:Epictetus says in this regard

Get them [i.e. riches] then," says he, "that we may have them." If I can get them and" keep my self-respect, honour, magnanimity, show me the way and I will get them. But if you call on me to lose the good things that are mine, in order that you may win things that are not good, look how unfair and thoughtless you are. And which do you really prefer? Money, or a faithful, modest friend? Therefore help

me rather to keep these qualities, and do not expect from me actions which will make .me lose them

The Pride of Learning

One of the dangerous stages in the course of personal advancement and .achievement where one may be affected with pride is that of scholarship

One's learning may appear to be so important and precious that he comes to consider his scholarly capacity and merit as being superior to that of anyone else. It is interesting that most of those who fall prey to the pride of knowledge and consider themselves extraordinary beings with special rights, are those whose learning is of a .low or mediocre level

knew a person who looked down upon the admirable learning and scholarly achievements of others, or basically he would not consider them noteworthy at all. His own learning and knowledge, however, were of a mediocre quality and his own personal worth was perhaps small. Whenever in a gathering there was a mention of someone's scholarship and achievements and everyone present expressed his opinion, he would nod affirmatively with a contemptuous smile. But when speaking of some of his own inconsequent achievements he would discuss the matter by giving such a long prelude and with such elaborate flourish as if no one had ever performed .a greater service

:A Western scholar says

Had we known the world better than we do and were it possible for us to compare what we know with what we are ignorant of, we would have believed differently. But it is a fact that our knowledge

is no more than a minute fraction of what remains unknown. What elements are there all of whose uses are well understood by us? The complete natural history of which plant and animal is known to us from the beginning to the end? There are various forces and agents all around us about which we still know nothing. The thick curtain that has hung for ages before our eyes has not yet been removed. We are still like primary students in the great school of nature. We only observe many things, but we .are unaware of their secrets

The world of thought is like an endless ocean on whose shores one stands watching the immense waters and the unceasing waves. Those who slip and fall into the water .struggle uselessly with the waves without hardly getting anywhere

Man always tries to unveil the face of reality and take a step forward on the path of science and knowledge. But our problems increase with every step that we advance .on this path

What we know is like the diameter of a circle and the unknown like the area circumscribed by it. As we increase the diameter, the area of the circle increases several times. Perhaps, in the future, our posterity will be able to advance further on this path and discover new secrets of the universe. But we, despite our unfortunate pride and egotism, are forced to fall on our knees and confess that we are ignorant of the secrets of existence and know

next to nothing in this regard. Why go far? We do not yet understand even ourselves. We do not know what we are and what relation do we have to nature. Yes, we don't know anything, and so are forced to put a question mark on everything that we come across, and pass on.(۱)

The first prerequisite in the quest of knowledge and for understanding any matter is that one's intent in study and discussion should not be negative and hostile But the proud and narcissistic person tries to take an unfair advantage of others' statements and argues in an unseemly manner. Actually his aim is not to discover the truth but to establish his superiority and prove his learning through debate.

In order to attain self-knowledge, it is necessary first to discover the facts through a correct method and to be make sure of their truth and correctness. We can reach the truth better in this way than through sterile controversy. In matters whose exact nature is unknown to us and which we understand only vaguely, our primary aim in discovering the truth should be to resolve the ambiguities surrounding the issue so that the matter can be seen in its simplicity denuded of complexities.

Destructive Activities

The harmful effects of pride affect many aspects of life. In view of their harm it is all the more necessary to give thought to curing this spiritual malady.

If there were a lesser role of pride and conceit in conversations and debates, there would be an automatic

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۱- Dar justoju-e khushbakhti, pp. ۵۸, ۲۱۹.

decrease in many hostilities and confrontations. That is because many needless conflicts and confrontations between individuals and groups arise only because they are motivated by pride. In their effort to wrest some apparent gain which is seemingly to their advantage, they cause themselves and others much harm by failing to solve .their problems through fair and sound logic and mutual understanding

A proud person may become prone to other such undesirable qualities as envy, stinginess, and malice. A perpetual desire to see others fail may take possession of his entire being. If he sees someone who is better and more capable at performing some task, his heart overflows with envy, even in matters essentially unrelated to his own profession. This feeling may becomes so painful and unbearable and such a hostile passion may gradually come to dominate him that all his productive efforts are over shadowed by his urge to defeat his rival. His activities in life are not of immediate concern to him. His ultimate goal is to see his rival fail. As his activities assume a largely destructive aspect, his mental and physical energies are wasted. Whenever he gets a chance he tries by all means to satisfy the demonic urge that rules his being .and intentions

Naturally, everybody shuns and avoids the company of proud and conceited individuals, in the same way that they are scared of humility in their relations with others. This acute tendency destroys even the most valuable and strongest of bonds. It is an undeniable

fact that indifference to the feelings of others and a contemptuous disregard for them produce a reaction resulting in one's being treated in a contemptuous and insulting manner by them. The proud person gives significance only to his own feelings and is totally lacks consideration for others. This one-sided attitude creates a contradiction between his wishes on the one hand and the insulting and indifferent attitude of others on the other. With a shattered spirit and an agitated heart he is forced to face .the blows of unexpected and unceasing indifference that he has to encounter

Congenial manners, which have a close relation with a person's inner moral state, not only leave a desirable effect on one's life but have a profound influence on other people's hearts. Those who really possess outstanding merits and moral virtues are like a refreshing spring which appeases the thirst of their associates with its fresh and pleasant water. Modesty and true refinement become real when they arise from one's nature. Otherwise those who resort to artificial means in this regard only deceive themselves. Everyone's spirit and mode of thinking is visible through his .conduct and it is not possible to conceal them by any means

Spiritual Health

Life is action and effort through and through. At times one is successful and triumphant in the course of this struggle; at other times one has to face defeat. Those who succeed on the stage of life may fall prey to pride and conceit as a result of some limited success

in their work or profession. Pride overshadows their entire being. On occasions those who are unsuccessful in some matters may ascribe their defeat to bad luck or to the envy of malicious enemies and the obstacles created by them. As a result they surrender themselves totally to despair. Although failure and defeat are bitter and unpleasant and success and triumph are pleasant and sweet, in success one should not become proud of one's expertise and wisdom, nor should one fall prey to endless .despair and regret in failure

If one were to remain realistic and composed in success as well as in defeat and observe the golden mean between the two extremes, that would be the sign of a healthy spirit. However, the attainment of this degree of moderation requires a tough .and serious struggle against one's ego

The makeup of man's psychic life has been designed in such a way that it has its own limits like everything else in this world. The tensions caused by failure and deprivation may be evaded, but they would reappear in disguise to take a destructive and .rebellious form

The difficulty of attaining to self-knowledge in regard to one's spiritual needs is an undeniable reality. But short-sighted people think that they know themselves better than anyone else, that they are aware of the causes that lie behind their thoughts, .motives and behaviour, and they know their inner being thoroughly

The real causes that lie behind wrong and unfair judgements and misunderstandings are errors arising from self-knowledge. The

main factor in these difficulties should be considered to lie in the ignorance of the limits of one's innate capacities, the role of heredity, of education and environment, in one's psychological makeup, and in the ignorance of one's inadequacies and the hold of desires and lusts. In the same way that ancient philosophy stressed the principle of knowing oneself, knowledge of the elements of self- knowledge is considered the most important principle of mental health by contemporary psychology, which has .made interesting and valuable discoveries in its study of human nature

The development of good human qualities in the soul requires that one should be aware of one's spiritual needs, the way the human psyche works, and the implications of one's undesirable feelings, each of which is a result of inner actions and reactions. Moreover, one should be aware to some extent of the emotions that derive from complex sources so as to be able to distinguish between misleading desires and genuine aspirations and capacities. One should be capable of defending oneself against dangers that constantly threaten one's personality and spiritual well-being, being extremely vigilant not to surrender one's life to illusive imaginings and vain .dreams for the sake of some imaginary form of happiness

All those who suffer from psychological complexes and ailments are either those who are constantly possessed by nightmarish despair and despondency or are individuals who are ignorant of their latent capacities and energies so as to be able to compensate for their inadequacies with the help of

their own powers and to replace deficiencies with merits. Accordingly, it is necessary that they take upon themselves the arduous task of self-discovery by making an all-round effort.

As a matter of principle, man, by virtue of his passion for acquisitiveness, is greatly troubled by every obstacle and hurdle that frustrates the fulfilment of his desires and hinders his monopolistic and unshared control over events. It is these obstacles that give rise to aggression, malice, and anguish. Transitory desires and incendiary lusts can easily cause failure in making correct judgements. The Noble Messenger, may God bless him and his Household, warned people against following desires:

Beware of (misleading) desires, for desires make one blind and deaf.(1)

Ignorance of One's Inadequacies

Pride and vanity often do not allow one to be aware of one's inadequacies and the limitations of one's abilities. This ignorance about one's inadequacies is the main obstacle to spiritual maturity and the development of an independent personality. As a consequence, one is kept from compensating for these inadequacies and removing his defects which can be easily amended in many cases,

Imam 'Ali, may Peace be upon him, said:

The proud and vainglorious person is unaware of his own defects. Were he to see the merits of others, he would have been upset by his defects and inadequacies [and taken steps to amend them].(2)

'Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, may Peace be upon him, considers pride and complacency the result of the mental inadequacy of their victims. He says:

Self-complacency is the evidence of the weakness of one's

1- Nahj al-fasahah, p. ٢٠١.

٢- Al-Amidi, Ghurar al-hikam wa durar al-kalim, p. ٩٥.

intellect.(1)

Pride is destructive for one's intellectual faculty.(2)

Spinoza, the well-known European philosopher, writes:

The man ... who is ignorant of himself is ignorant of the foundation of all the virtues, and consequently is ignorant of all the virtues. Again, to act in conformity with virtue is nothing but acting according to the guidance of reason, and he who acts according to the guidance of reason must necessarily know that he acts according to the guidance of reason. He, therefore, who is ignorant of himself, and consequently (as we have just shown) altogether ignorant of all the virtues, cannot in any way act in conformity with virtue, that is to say, is altogether impotent in mind. Therefore, the greatest pride or despondency indicates the greatest impotence of mind.(3)

It is possible that things which appear to be real to us may turn out to have no reality. It is with the criteria of intellect and reason that realities are distinguished from illusions. Those whose eyesight is weak use spectacles, but there are no spectacles to compensate for the weakness of intellectual vision. To overcome it, one has to attend to his inner being and resort to an analytic examination of one's inner self. Carefully and vigilantly one must distinguish one's true capacities from deceptive and harmful tendencies. There are many who neglect their mental energies without using them for personal improvement or social betterment. They remain without even a superficial knowledge of their wonderful inner powers and energies, until there emerges an opportunity for

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۱- Ibid., p. ۴۲۴.

۲- Ibid., p. ۲۶.

۳- Spinoza, op. cit., cf. Falsafeh nazari, p. ۱۰۶.

the manifestation of their fruitful capacities. Therefore an enormous amount of beneficial capacities are wasted by us without any knowledge of their potent .character

A person discovers his defects and inadequacies but does not give them any significance, or considers them negligible, that means that he considers them a necessary part of his being. Self-examination and self- scrutiny, however, require time, attention and care. It is wrong to imagine that one can discover one's spiritual characteristics in a short time and identify one's weak points and inadequacies. Knowing oneself and being able to confront certain terrible inner qualities require a clear insight and great courage. These cannot be achieved except gradually and with continuous care and perseverance. Nevertheless, man can attain brilliant success in his struggle against inner indignities by bringing about a beneficial change within :himself with his faculties of thought and will. Imam 'All, may Peace be upon him, said

(One who examines his defects and inadequacies succeeds in discovering them.(۱)

Self–love, not Egoism

Islam provides man with reliable criteria and adequate methods for the fulfilment of his psychological needs. It devotes itself to the reform and refinement of human nature through a comprehensive and all-round program. The rules and regulating devices that Islam employs for moderating human wants give a burnish to the human spirit and intellect, thus basing all human effort on true reality. That is because if emotions and feelings are left uncontrolled, they will not only be harmful for others but will also create psychological disorders and conflicts which will

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.Ghurar al-hikam. p. ۶۱۴ -۱

.lead to the individual's degeneration and fall

Self-love is one of the factors whose significant role in life cannot be ignored. Were it .to be oriented towards a sublime goal it would impel man towards virtue and merit

However, there is a great difference between self-love and narcissism. Self-love is a sign of spiritual greatness and an expansive personality, which prompts man toward humbleness and sacrifice. Egotism on the other hand restricts the scope of one's .thoughts and leads human nature into abasement and indignity

:Imam 'Ali, may Peace be upon him, said

(The humblest of men is one who has a high regard for his personal worth.(۱)

:Jagot says

Egocentrism means sacrificing others for the sake of one's wishes and happiness, while self-assertion is a psychological state that is distinguished by the determination to develop one's personality. Egocentrism is always accompanied with extreme .weakness, whereas self-assertion is accompanied with an extraordinary strength

If you resolve not to surrender to the will of others and you think that its imposition is contrary to your health, vitality and personal success and effectiveness, you are a .self-asserting person

But this does not imply that you should be insensitive and unresponsive to others' indignity and misfortune. I am only suggesting that instead of dissipating one's energies in a thousand directions one should store them for opportune occasions. Self-assertion does not preclude self- sacrifice either, but subjects it to a certain principle, and a self-asserting person is most willing to assist someone in a desperate .condition or to make a friend happy

Morally

p: ۳۰۷

.Ibid., p. ١٩٥ -١

speaking, one who does not have sufficient strength to preserve his courage and mental equanimity in the midst of problems should avoid the company of weak people and join the ranks of the strong. Otherwise he will soon find weakness settling upon him, leading to torpidity and lack of courage. It is the duty of everyone to respond to the wishes and aspirations of others. But on the other hand there is a simple criterion of a correct balance between egoism and self-sacrifice, and that is making an effort .to accomplish one's duty whether it is meant for personal or general benefit

There is no doubt that if the members of a nation resolve to develop their personalities they will attain to the highest degree of equilibrium efficiency, and dynamism. Accordingly, there is nothing better than spiritual training, and it is self-assertion that develops self-denial to its highest degree. In fact, moral rectitude is a (product of spiritual balance.(۱

Islam suggests every means that is required for the development of this strong urge, which is based on very firm foundations, giving great care to its refinement. But it also negates the same urge when it assumes a destructive aspect under the influence of rebellious appetites. In fact, one who allows himself to be led by this unguided and devastating urge ruins the foundations of his well-being and will meet a blameworthy .end

Self-love is approved by Islam when it has a right and straight orientation, is free from any kind of deviation and

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.Paul Clement Jagot, Persian trans. Qudrat-e iradeh, pp. ۷۰-۷۱ -۱

crookedness, and is not subversive. It should be so oriented as to secure happiness in this world as well as everlasting felicity, nothing greater than which is conceivable. A Muslim who discovers reality with an open mind and a clear insight will never surrender everlasting felicity for transitory pleasures, which are moreover mixed with all types of pains and anxieties. Real love and sympathy for himself do not allow him to yield to the indignity and bondage of base and destructive appetites, which would moreover invite everlasting punishment and endless torment. A self-love that leads .one to such a fate is not at all worthy of the sublime station of the human being

Real and Abiding Love

Islam wants man to attain to the various degrees of love in life and to prove his worthiness for reaching them. It begins by infusing the love of God into the souls of human beings, teaching them to put the love of God, Who has bestowed upon him the gift of life and all his powers, faculties, and talents, before attachment to everything else, for this love is the most significant principle of life in the real world. In view of all this grace and munificence, no one is more worthy of love and sincere devotion than the Divine Being. This fact becomes totally clear to us when we examine all the various levels of love, from passing and transitory attachments to real and eternal love. Having filled the heart with the love of God, it creates in

every individual in society the bonds of deep and heartfelt love between humans As all men have been created from a single soul and have descended from one ancestor, they should love each other mutually and treat each other with kindness and sincere feeling, as they are brethren in respect of their origin and common interests. It presents such a wonderful picture of the rights of human brotherhood that it drives the inner being of humans to movement and action and furnishes the motives and the zeal for initiating men into such a sincere and pure love. It is in this way that it creates a self-love within man's being that is balanced and harmonious, developing it in such a fashion as to liberate him of the bondage of pride and egoism in the shadow of that balance and equilibrium so that he never develops any extreme egocentric .tendencies

Greatness and majesty exclusively belong to the Divine Being, Who in Its Holiness transcends need and dependence. In fact all existents are dependent upon Him in all :aspects

O mankind, you are all dependent on God and God is Self-sufficient, All- laudable. ((۳۵:۱۵

It is as a result of deviance from the heavenly program of human education that leads men into the afflictions of pride and conceit. In one of its passages, the Noble Qur'an calls the proud person's attention to his abjectness and lowliness and brings down his :spirit from the heights of conceit and baseless imaginings

;And walk not in the earth exultantly

certainly you will never pierce through the earth, not reach the mountains in height. ((۱۷:۳۷

Those who have fixed their eyes on the highest Source of being do not become subject to pride and exultation when blessed with affluence. That is because Islam .enjoins modesty and moderation and does not like pride and self-aggrandisement

Turn not thy cheek away from the people in scorn, and walk not in the earth (exultantly; God loves not any man proud and boastful. (۳۱:۱۸

The Characteristic Sense of Worthiness

The Muslim's sense of worthiness is not related to any success in life and on account of living in ease and prosperity. Rather he has a feeling of worthiness and merit from the first moment that the light of faith is illumined in his heart. He is not moved by false and fake values fabricated by humans and is aware of the realities of life. Islam blesses him with a free spirit, a clear vision, and an inner moderation with the help of which he is able to rise above the abject level of corporeality and climb to the heights of human sublimity. He makes use of the material world without becoming bogged .down in the mire of terrestrial pleasures

It is not possible for fake values to overshadow his divine values and to dominate his spirit and perceptions, for they are too worthless to form the basis of his sense of worthiness. Furthermore, he does not bow his head before anyone and does not feel .lowly and weak in front of any power

He refrains from any kind of undignified humility which may compromise his personal worth. His humility is exclusive to his relation with the Sacred Divine Being and Its .Majesty, but he feels powerful and steady in all other states

:God exhorts the faithful to preserve this station in all situations and stages

(And you are the upper ones it you are believers. (۳:۱۳۹

If a wound touches you, a like wound already has touched the heathen; such days We (deal out in turn among men. (۳:۱۴۰

In this verse, the Qur'an reminds the Muslims of their superiority at a moment when they had been defeated in battle and the enemy had been victorious. That is because this superiority arises from their faith in God and attachment to the Source of reality, and these qualities transform them into a dynamic force. This superiority is not .obtained through victory against the enemy so as to be lost at the moment of defeat

The Muslims enjoyed an upper hand over others because they believed in faith as the highest of human merits and assets. This infused them with an enthusiasm and zeal arising from faith. They had been emancipated from all the bondages that had bound them and had triumphed over them. This discovery was solely a product of the .guidance provided by the Qur'an and the Prophet's teaching

Pride and egoism are big hurdles in the way of progress and advancement in life. The complacency created by pride results in the stagnation and backwardness of the proud. In

the same way, the lack of self- satisfaction and possession of higher aims in life lead .to continuous progress and edification

Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, may Peace be upon him, makes this point in two' :of his aphorisms

(Pride and vanity are obstacles in the way of man's progress and growth.(١

One who is dissatisfied with his performance is prompted thereby to improve his (work.(٢

:He also says

(One who is proud of his fair state and characteristics will fail to improve himself.(٣

:William John Reilly, the famous scholar, writes

I have found that certain troublesome and harmful ideas and beliefs in my mind, which cause me mental pain and sorrow more than any other beliefs, are those which relate to myself! Now how did r discover this fact? Well, let me tell you something about my own opinion about my voice, for most people like their own voices. The only .thing whose possession caused me satisfaction was having an exquisite voice

I have made many public speeches and had even won a gold medal at the age of .eighteen years. I imagined that I had a melodious, refined and pleasant voice

One day I took a tape of one of my speeches on a topic made for the radio and listened to it carefully as any other listener. This was the first time that I was listening to my voice as any other listener. God, suddenly I was shocked. My voice was much poorer than what I had imagined it to be. It was like a

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١- Nahj al-balaghah ed. Fayd al-Islam, p. ١١٥٧.

٢- Ghurar al-hikam, p. ۶۶٨.

٣- Ibid., p. ۶٧٧.

moan, suppressed, inarticulate, colourless, flat and painful to the ears. What was worse, while I listened to it there were several other people in the room. I was upset. I explained to those present that I was not feeling quite well when I had made this speech, that I had no experience of the radio and sound recording when my voice was .being recorded

But while their attention was turned elsewhere I played other tapes of my raucous voice and the same kind of sounds that wounded one's nerves arose from them. Finally after listening to all the tapes of my speeches I had to admit that the belief that I had held for several years about my voice was wrong. For the first time I had to set aside my vanity and try hard to improve and refine my voice. It seemed a hopeless job at first, but whenever I remembered what Demosthenes had done I would cheer .up. I am still working on it

This experience with my voice taught me one thing, that it was possible to launch a prolonged struggle for my self-improvement. Until I could bear the humiliation of having to accept this defect of mine I did not begin to make any progress in improving .myself

A shattered pride and conceit make man realistic and lead to improvement and advancement. This reform and progress take place only when we attend to facts and set aside our vain ideas and beliefs about ourselves. Otherwise we remain in ignorance

and darkness and keep our own cherished self from reform and progress.(١)

Due to the aberrations in his outlook, the vain person at times imagines himself to possess certain merits that are in fact absent in him. Imam Sadiq, may Peace be upon him, said:

One who is proud of himself and his conduct is such due to deviance from the right path of guidance, and, contrary to reality, he claims to possess merits which he lacks.(٢)

The proud and egocentric person is like a silkworm wound up in the cocoon of his own fancies. He is so intoxicated with the liquor of egoism that he considers the whole world to revolve around himself.

Imam 'Ali, may Peace be upon him, said:

The intoxication induced by ignorance and pride is more lasting and enduring than the intoxication produced by liquors.(٣)

Chapter ١١: The Waves of Change Created by Outstanding Personalities

point

In times of utmost darkness in the history of mankind there have appeared certain geniuses whose names shine on the forehead of the proud pages of history. With their outstanding spiritual qualities, these historic men could bring about great changes on the stage of human life. They dazzled the world with their actions as if their very being were like a brilliant torch whose light would endure forever.

At times the waves of change created by outstanding personalities who enter the social arena are so wide and extensive that they encompass all human societies and they make an intense and far-reaching impact on the ideas of mankind. In fact it is these brilliant figures who

۱- Tafakkur-e sahih, pp. ۵۰-۵۳.

۲- Shaykh 'Abbas al-Qummi, Safinat al-Bihar, vol. ۲, p. ۱۶۱.

۳- Ghurar al-hikam, p. ۴۴۰.

change the countenance of the world and they even conquer weak and feeble temperaments with their powerful influence and draw them after themselves, giving .them morale and the light of hope

On the contrary, there are many people whose arena of activity in life is very limited and confined. The book of their life draws to a close with feeble movements and their lives terminate in oblivion. The flickering and slim candle of their existence is at last .extinguished in total darkness

The difference between these kind of personalities is to be sought in their ethos, because the variance in the levels of persons depends on the extent and scope of .their spirits and the amount of their inner power

What is the relation between personalities and social change? Are persons a product of the world's events or is it that the events are brought about by outstanding individuals? Scientific studies show that the individual and society reciprocally influence each other, and while man is influenced by environment, he also brings about changes in the environment. It is not possible to study the individual by placing him outside the environment of social life. However, at the same time, it is individuals who can change the conditions of their environment with their spiritual power and .transform the face of society

The basic factor in social changes and relations is the power of will, whether it belongs to an individual or to a community. But the significance and value of the individual is greater, because it

is the leaders who guide the national potentials towards desirable goals and lead the destiny of society towards a shining and glorious future.

In order that we may be able to carry out the judgements of reason, our being grants us a faculty called will. The human will is the resultant of two forces that act upon it. On the one hand is the force of instinct that acts upon it. On the other it is influenced by the intellect and reason.

The inability arising from the weakness of will is the result of the opposite forces within man. Inability does not mean that one is totally devoid of the power of decision making. Rather, he is capable of carrying out any act that he wants. But he has no power to translate his intentions from the stage of the mind to that of external reality.

There are many individuals who suffer with the inadequacy of an inner light. They might possess extensive means in life. However, despite their capabilities and the special and valuable opportunities that may arise for them, they are not very effectual, although they have fixed their gaze on a higher plane of life. They lack the power and determination to climb the ladder of progress and expect others to perform hard and taxing tasks for them, tasks which are themselves the means to growth and development. If they do not themselves take an initiative to realise their goals and endeavour for their sake, what else can help them

?in materialising their hopes

Often they make beneficial and profound plans, but they fail to obtain any kind of results. They draw up great practical plans which never reach the point of .implementation

Lack of Will Power, the Obstacle to Success

With a weak will, one's life in its different aspects is sure to end in defeat. Misfortunes multiply as a result of an inert will, and neither talent nor genius can be substitutes for a powerful will. What is the use if one possesses outstanding talents and gifts but is unable to employ them beneficially in reaching his goals? Knowledge and learning are useless when one cannot employ these assets fruitfully with the help of will in .reaching one's goal

Think what would have been the state of man if he had been devoid of the faculty of will and determination. What would have been the state of the world and what results would have been achieved by the law of evolution and progress? A study of history reveals the fact that basically all human inventions and discoveries have been due to men of determination, who overcame all the obstacles and hardships in their way through perseverance and an unflagging determination, as a result of which they attained brilliant victories. Problems and hardships are bound to vanish before the .genius and determination of someone who does not know defeat

When Napoleon wanted to take his heavily armed forces through the dangerous and difficult pass of Saint Bernard, he consulted his military experts. He asked them if it was possible to get

through the pass. The experts went into deep thought and they replied with doubt and hesitation that there might be a very slim chance of getting through the pass. On hearing their statements, Napoleon made a firm decision, and with a strong .determination and without loss of time he gave the orders to advance

England and Austria considered the decision of this powerful French general as a form of madness and recklessness, for it seemed improbable that he would be able to cross the Alps with all his equipment, heavy artillery and sixty thousand soldiers. But Napoleon had in his mind Messina, which was then under siege and the Austrian .forces also threatened Nice

When this dangerous and most difficult operation was carried out successfully and Napoleon crossed the Alps with his armies, some said that what Napoleon had done was not a difficult task after all. Others said that if they had done it before Napoleon, .they would certainly have succeeded

Many military commanders had the capacity and adequate power like Napoleon to carry out such an amazing operation. Only they lacked the necessary determination, and uncertainty, doubt and vacillation kept them from taking a decisive step and utilising appropriate opportunities. Instead of advancing they retreated, while Napoleon's firm decisions and quick movements earned this great French general such victories which left the world in amazement and wonder. The extraordinary volume of his daily work amazed everyone who knew him. He had the power to instil dynamism in the most dispirited of

soldiers and to put the spirit of courage into the most timid of individuals. He would .often sit through the night reading reports and answering letters

There is no secret formula of success. Rather success is the natural result of effort and endeavour in carrying out one's work. The foremost of persons in this world who overcome obstacles and difficulties are those who have a strong will power and who, like the eagle, make use of strong winds to climb to elevated heights. For this kind of individuals, who have initiative, no difficulty can cause them to abandon their decisions; rather, they consider defeat as a bridge to victory. Their morale grows in the midst of hardships and whatever the stage of life they may be in, they can always .make a mark in the world

Vigilance in the Midst of Problems

Basically some persons do not come to themselves and wake up unless confronted with hardship. A tree that has been forced to make a place for itself in the midst of rocks grows to be hardy and strong due to its constant struggle against unfavourable .factors. It will be able to withstand storms and resist unfavourable conditions

:A psychologist writes

Young people should be made to understand that in order to achieve their goals, they should not expect a smooth ride over a well-paved road. Few have ever gotten anywhere without facing disappointing obstacles. Whenever we confront problems in the right spirit, not only they will not be a hindrance but will be helpful to our progress. No

.exercise is more beneficial than the effort to overcome problems

The psychologists have shown that more than thirty-five per cent of ordinary people do not make use of the years of their lives. Even those who are conspicuously active and attain to considerable positions and ultimately obtain success, make use of only a .fifty per cent of their lifetime

There are some people who cease making progress on reaching a certain stage and they cannot extend the scope of their activity to advance beyond the point they have reached to a higher altitude or a more distant horizon. This kind of persons actually possess the essential merits necessary for growth only to an inadequate extent and their capacity for progress is limited. One's ability and will power are the greatest asset for progress and development, and one may either squander this capital or .invest it with profit

Every step that one takes is the product of one's ideas, will, and determination. If these are weak and insignificant, the product of one's work will also not be significant or valuable. When persons with a weak will make a decision, they are shaky and beset with doubt and hesitation. A small remark from others makes them change their mind and revise their plans. Weak persons are perpetually vacillating and of a divided mind. With their uncertainty and flickering character they prove that they are not their own masters and, like a leaf carried about by the wind, have to follow the will of others in

.all situations. Hesitation and indecision are often equal to failure

One who constantly wastes his time worrying about trifling details and delving on insignificant matters, only fretting and brooding over his problems under the influence of diverse motives without taking action, certainly wastes his ability, energy and time .by delay and procrastination. He will be unable to reach the sources of success

How often it happens that precious time and valuable talents are wasted as a result of indecision and delay, and a promising life is turned into defeat and failure! When one falls victim to such a fruitless and sterile spirit, what power can help him overcome the obstacles faced in life? Imagine a contrary situation, of someone who is not of a divided mind and stable in his decisions. He does not waste his time waiting for some favourable accident to occur. Rather, having a determined faith in his own ability, he does not abandon his righteous goal due to the objections of critics. Nothing can make him turn away from the path that he has chosen rightly. He discards any kind of stray thoughts and plans contrary to his goal which may cross his mind. On encountering such persons in life one can well appreciate the strength of their character and the great value of the achievements of those who combine within themselves the power .of several individuals

In any case, success is not possible without decisiveness, because faith in one's success is itself half of success, and victory

.comes to those who are determined to be victorious

There are many people who cannot pursue a task to its end due to indecision. For instance, if they are attracted by a profession and trade, for some time they pursue it with great interest and enthusiasm. But as soon as they face difficulties, their interest and enthusiasm disappears and they become disappointed. Next time they take up .some other trade that has brought success and advancement to some people

Thus they remain shaky and uncertain all their lives and constantly keep on shifting from one profession to another. While selecting a profession or trade they do not make use of their minds and their power of judgement . Before they can discover the secret behind others' success and evaluate their own performance and achievement in life, suddenly it dawns upon them that they have spent a lifetime in learning and abandoning various trades. That is because they could not remain firm in their decisions or persevere in their work until the final fruitful stages. They discover that throughout life they have missed all the appropriate chances and opportunities, which .arise only rarely

One of the afflictions of the person with a weak will is that he is always subject to his desires and caprices. He might be able to distinguish the right way, but unfortunately what he chooses is a deviant path. He continues on a course of action so long as his desires and appetites do not dissuade him. Moreover, even a

minor accident is sufficient to render him helpless and despondent and to bring him on .his knees

We need a strong and steady will in order to resist the pressure of misleading and destructive desires. A basic condition for being able to derive a right and desirable result from our will is to follow the dictates of reason in our decisions and exercising our will. There is a world of difference between a higher will reliant on reason and conscience and an impulsive will that acts under the impulses of perverse feelings, pride and egoism. While the first is the source of human felicity and happiness, being .fundamental to success, the other leads to wretchedness and degeneration

One who employs his will to satisfy his selfish motives and to commit all sorts of offences and acts contrary to human dignity is in fact devoid of freedom and is a captive of carnal appetites. One comes across many dark and bloody pages in the .history of mankind which are a consequence of this kind of unruly will

The person who resorts to suicide on encountering the slightest hardship in life has a weak intellect and lacks courage and manliness. That is because he succumbs to the problems and difficulties of life, which proliferate in all spheres of human life, and .confesses to his own weakness and abasement by his action

The Scope of Human Possibilities

Everything in the realm of being has to begin its journey on the path of growth and development and advance towards perfection in order to

be able to realise its capacities and potentialities to the highest degree. Man is also .not an exception to this general law

One of the fundamental problems of the human being is how is it to develop its essential being during different phases of life in order to attain to the highest degree and peak of humanity. Before everything else man should become aware of the extent of his capacities and potentialities that lie latent in his being. He should realise that he has all the worthiness to acquire the greatest gifts that God has bestowed upon him. In that case the very foundations of his self-confidence would be more stable and firm. His latent energies and faculties would awaken and become active. These faculties have an extraordinarily great power in broadening the scope of life .and have sufficient capacity for growth and edification

The lack of self-confidence on the part of most persons is not due to the lack of possibilities but due to the absence of self-knowledge. There are some people who have useful and effective scientific ideas, but due to the lack of confidence in their innate gifts and capacities, they never cross the threshold of their thoughts. Doubt, uncertainty, and fear of defeat are signs of weakness. How often has this lack of confidence buried talented and innovative minds and what great innovations and !original and profound ideas have been buried under the ashes of oblivion

When one realises that every task and activity involves a new power, an

asset which one never imagined that one possessed before it came to one's knowledge, its manifestation paves the way for further progress and one becomes ready to acquire more significant powers. Hence one who wants to draw the maximum benefit from life and to benefit from every opportunity must first acquire .confidence and will power and then devote himself to developing and strengthening it

:Alexis Carrel says

For the preservation of life it is not enough to protect it; rather, life must be made simple, more profound, dynamic and noble. That is, we must increase our physical and psychological activities in respect of intensity, quality, and quantity. Only strength leads to edification. The power that we need is not like the muscular power of an athlete or the spiritual power of an ascetic, or the mental power of a philosopher and scholar. The power that we seek is the harmony as well as the endurance of physical organs and the mind. Also the capacity to endure fatigue, changes of weather, hunger, lack of sleep, grief, suffering, and ultimately the will to hope and act, a .physical and mental strength immune to defeat, and a joy that fills all our being

How can we acquire this power? The only way to attain it is daily and regular moderate effort. That involves the involuntary effort of all the bodily organs and the voluntary effort of will and intelligence. In the course of daily and regular exercises one must gradually learn how to create discipline in

life, how to follow the said principles and become master of oneself.

Similarly, with brief and regular effort one must try to master one's emotions, anger, indifference, lethargy, pride, desires, fatigue and pain. This exercise is necessary for all civilised people and the great error of modern education is to ignore it. One cannot extend the scope of the force of life within oneself without the intervention of the will.(۱)

Some people do not wish to pay the appropriate price for a brilliant life. They are always after some quick and simple means, although its outcome and product should be of little significance and worth. They refrain from endeavouring for what may give dignity and brilliance to life. They avoid the responsibilities which play a basic role in improving their selves and purifying their souls and which would broaden their mental horizon and pave the way to success.

However, those who have trained themselves to shoulder various responsibilities become fitter and their state would be many times better than of those whose lives revolve around petty responsibilities. They have a much wider field open before them and can traverse the various levels of advancement more easily.

The higher one's ideals are, the greater is the power that drives one towards his goals and this depends on his faith and on the extent of the effort that he makes for their realisation. Ultimately, it is here that one must seek the secret of man's triumph over obstacles and hardships.

The capacity to distinguish between what is

۱- Alexis Carrel, Refexions sur la conduite de la vie, Persian trans. Rah warasm-e zindagi, p. ۸۷.

good and bad and the understanding of vices and virtues is not solely sufficient for the attainment of felicity. Rather, that which is of utmost importance is to possess the power of action in life. A person may know perfectly what is good and bad and may even consider himself responsible in relation to the various duties that surround him and feel the necessity of fulfilling them scrupulously. But at the same time he may lack the power to carry out these duties and the necessary determination to put his .intentions into effect

The most basic duty of everyone is to be constantly and continually vigilant of his conduct, to reinforce his creative powers, and to avoid negative and vicious factors that destroy his positive powers, so that it becomes his second nature to rely on his power of will in times of necessity. That is because a firm will would keep one steady in critical moments of life and while making sensitive decisions, when the least .amount of infirmity and laxity might be awfully dangerous

Moreover, one should not plunge into a course of action without paying attention to its consequences and sufficiently examining its various aspects. Otherwise he would be like a mariner who sets out on the sea without a compass. It is a mistake to take the ship of life without a compass into the ocean of being. One must know the direction in .which one is moving and where his actions and efforts would take him

The Criterion of Responsibility in the View of Islam

In Islam

the will is considered the axis of duty and the focus of all human affairs. It is what distinguishes the human being from other animals. The will is the sole means for checking the excesses of carnal drives and with it man can resist his violent urges and guide his energies in a beneficial direction. Ultimately, he is free whether to attain real human perfection by overcoming his unruly ego, or to wander in the realm of bestiality by giving a free rein to his animal urges and to become an unruly beast that .knows no restraints

There is no exaggeration in the adoption by Islam of this criterion of distinction between man and other animals, because the meaning of humanity is nothing except .this, and basically persons without a will are not human in the real sense

Islam is not at all unaware of the reality of human nature and the various faculties and constitutions that lie within it. Similarly, it has a clear and precise view of man's capacity to pursue the higher ideals and the possibility of his fulfilling the duties required of him. It summons man to rise above the animal plane with all his faculties in the shadow of will, asking him to attain to the highest degree of perfection possible to the extent of his powers and potentialities. One who forfeits the real distinctive criterion of humanity and surrenders himself totally to subversive impulses has his faculties polluted and disabled, and his thinking faculty is severely

.damaged. As a result he would be incapable of achieving the real goal of life

The exercise of the soul appears to be a difficult in the beginning. But with some mental effort the obstacles are gradually removed and the way is opened to the fulfilment of various duties. When the will, which is the guarantee of progression in life and the means of advancement and edification, is employed in the way of sacrifice, sincerity, and any kind of sublime feeling and sentiment, it will contribute to the person's greatness. When one acts with such a spirit he would obtain wonderful results whatever his field of activity, and will leave luminous pages in the book of his .life

Under the inspiration of the educative programs of Islam, individuals in society are motivated to employ their will power for the realisation of the higher objectives of life. From the viewpoint of psychology also the consequence of a resurrected will is .positive and strong motivation

Mann writes in The Principles of Psychology

That which is usually called will power is in the view of the psychologists the relative power of motives. Decision-making in a given case is the resultant of motives in a .dynamic equilibrium

In other words, in every case the alternative chosen is one which satisfies our motives to a greater extent in respect of natural drives and previous experiences. For instance, when the Japanese soldier is defeated in battle and he finds resistance to be useless, he is confronted with two alternatives. One is to surrender and to save his

life. But he has been trained since childhood to believe that by surrendering to the enemy he would be compromising his honour in his own eyes and those of others as well as before the spirits of his ancestors (whom he believes to observe him). The other alternative before him is to kill himself and to find everlasting honour and dignity in the life that he has been promised after death. That is why he prefers to kill himself. As we have had a training different from the Japanese, we cannot properly understand his way of thinking. But in fact anyone under the influence of the same factors as the Japanese soldier would hardly do anything else.(۱)

The Firm Support of Will Power

In every task, the will needs a strong support to lean upon. That firm support of will is faith. Faith and will are interdependent. If one were to possess faith without employing will to fulfil it and without making effort, he would never achieve his goals. That is because everyone's success depends on his efforts. The Qur'an says:

[Or has he not been told of what is in the scrolls of Moses, and Abraham ... that a man shall have to his account nothing but his endeavour? (۵۳:۳۹)

On the contrary, if one were to possess will power without the effective weapon of faith, he would not cease making effort until he reaches a dead end in life. But when he finds that natural factors and causes have frustrated his efforts and he encounters problems

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۱- Mann, The Principles of Psychology, Pers. Trans. Usul-e rawanshendsi, p. ۱۴۵.

and obstacles that cannot be overcome, the fire of hope and confidence begins to die out within his spirit. In such testing conditions nothing except faith in the eternal power of God can rescue one from anxiety and anguish. The person possessing faith and the asset of a firm will relies on God in the toughest of moments and conditions. The light of hope is never extinguished within him and he always seeks assistance .from the infinite grace of the Almighty

God instructs the Noble Messenger of Islam that whenever he were to resolve on accomplishing a task he should pursue his goal single-mindedly with trust in the .eternal power of the Almighty

(So when you are resolved, then put your trust in God. (۳:۱۵۹

In order to weaken the determination of a person in carrying out some task, it is .sufficient to weaken his faith in relation to it

If one were to understand and believe that every effort and endeavour that he makes is affirmed by the Almighty, Who governs the entire order of existence, he would pursue his goal with constancy and perseverance. He would discover the basic source of success and, with such a spirit, he will overcome all obstacles and hardships in the way that he has chosen, as if the obstacles were actually the steps to his upward ascent. Dangers will add to his courage, and failures will multiply his efforts, and .whatever the obstacles he would not abandon his path

A study of history introduces us to persons

who have contributed to the advancement and felicity of mankind with their firm determination and high goals. They did not abstain from any kind of effort and struggle meant for the sake of the progress and edification of nations and, in fact, .they made their way through hardship and persecution

Foremost among them are the elect of (God and men of saintly excellence and freedom. The courage, perseverance and invincible will of these individuals, employed in the way of the deliverance of mankind and for the sake of their sacred goal, serve as a sublime and radiant example for mankind in general and their followers in particular. It were these outstanding religious figures who despite the torture and torment faced by them at the hands of their contemporaries are today regarded as .holy by the human community

Ali, may Peace be upon him, was a perfect example of an undefeatable human being.' :In one of his precious sermons he declares

By God, if all the Arabs were to join together in battle against me, I would not (withdraw from it.(١

:In the sermon addressed to Humam, he says

(O Humam, the spirit of the man of faith is tougher than granite.(٢

In the Battle of the Camel, when the forces of those who had broken their allegiance were prepared to confront 'Ali's army, he gave the banner to his son Muhammad ibn Hanafiyyah, and taught him the lesson of decisiveness and strengthened his will :power with these words

Even if the mountains were to crumble, you should

.Nahj al-balaghah, ed. Fayd al-Islam, p. ٩٢٢ -١
.Bihar al-anwar, vol. ١٥, p. ٩۴ -٢

not tremble. Clench your teeth tightly (so that spirit of determination takes hold of your entire being); pledge your skull with God; and let your feet be nailed into the ground. Cast your sight on the furthest fringes of the enemy and overlook (whatever may be an unpleasant sight), knowing that victory is from God, the Glorious (and our duty is only to pursue our goal resolutely).(۱)

Tenacity and Victory

A leader's iron will and tenacity of purpose can bring about a sudden change in the course of events and mobilise the masses in a wonderful manner. The resoluteness of such men in the way of their goal removes great obstacles from their path, as if there were something iron-like within them. At times their courage and alacrity often averts dangerous crises when the smallest delay and uncertainty would cause them and others to perish.

At the time of the conquest of Spain by Islamic warriors, Musa ibn Nadir was the chief commander of the Islamic armies in north Africa. For the conquest of Europe, he dispatched his slave Tariq ibn Ziyad towards Spain to gather intelligence concerning the enemy forces and to report to the chief commander. When Tariq arrived with his small force at the point of his assignment and made a reconnaissance of the position of the enemy, he found that it was an opportune time to attack. He thought that if he were to report to the headquarters and wait for orders, the enemy would be alerted and prepare for

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۱- Nahj al-balaghah, ed. Fayd al-Islam, p. ۵۳.

.battle. The moment of decision had came

In order to make his soldiers abandon all thoughts of possible retreat, he ordered all ships with which he had crossed the sea to be burnt. When the ships were burnt down, all hopes of retreat disappeared. In answer to those who were dismayed by his action and were critical of it he said: "The Muslim is not a bird to have a nest of its own." Then standing at the foot of the mountain known today as 'Jabl al-Tariq" :(Gibraltar) and facing the roaring waves of the sea, he delivered a speech. He said

O People! There is the roaring sea behind your backs and the enemy's army in front of you. The stores of the enemy are full of weapons and food supplies while you have recourse to nothing except what you may seize from the enemy with your iron will. You do not have access to any weapon except the swords that you carry. Now there !you are and the strong enemy

This fiery and impassioned speech of Tariq gave the soldiers the resoluteness and courage for a decisive battle. Then with appropriate tactics, he launched a terrible .offensive and fought unflaggingly until victory

Self-Suggestion

Self-suggestion is one of the means for strengthening the will to realise goals. Possessing higher aspirations and fixing one's gaze on the shining horizons of life .induce one to make a wilful and persisting quest for attaining those goals

:Imam 'Ali, the Master of the Pious, said

Vie with one another in

acquiring worthy qualities and merits, in possessing great ideals, and in entertaining majestic thoughts, so that you may receive their mighty reward and attain their momentous results.(۱)

Jagot says:

So long as you think that you cannot and that you do not have the capacity, the chances of success are small, and even if you possess the most brilliant of talents, they would come to nothing. Conversely, someone who is of ordinary intelligence and ability but is self confident will be successful. He would succeed because in the course of his quest and endeavour to realise his plans, he will discover the source of the qualities that he needs after making some effort. He succeeds due to his confidence in his progress and is not discouraged by the failure of others. He begins his work by utilising his experience, and rest assured that he would succeed much sooner and in a better manner than you ever imagined. In order to have the courage to launch a project, drive away doubt and hesitation from yourself. Perhaps others, out of caution and sympathy, may want to make you doubtful and hesitant about your own capacities. But don't you have doubts about the correctness of their prophecies? Will you permit everyone to put any suggestion that he likes into your mind?

Listen to others with an intelligent ear, but continue to develop and strengthen your courage. Observe those who possess this precious quality and make an analysis of it. Every night reassure yourself with a

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۱- Ghurar al-hikam, p. ۳۵۵.

series of far-reaching suggestions and imagine yourself to be in the skin of the courageous person that you would soon be. Whenever you get an opportunity-and be boldly innovative in creating one-take up a task that involves the making of decisions, and in testing times remember this suggestion: "I can and I will!" If you resolve upon an important task involving problems you are well familiar with, tell yourself that you can do it. Raise your vigilance to the required pitch and you will become used to (confronting them.(١

In the same way that pessimism is a kind of negative self-suggestion in the view of psychologists that leads to worry and anxiety, optimism is a self- suggestion to reinforce one's spirit and to make up for inadequate will power. Accordingly, Imam :'Ali, may Peace be upon him, said

(Be optimistic about the future in order to succeed in overcoming obstacles.(٢

Chapter ١٢: Secured Spiritual Well-Being by Means of Fruitful Social Contracts

point

The influence of social surroundings is a basic problem of education and a topic that has been given special attention by moralists. In general, man leads his life among people, and the fabric of his personal existence is made in society. The role of society in laying down the foundations of an individual's personality, moral character, and .conduct is one of the self-evident facts of human existence

Man cannot break his links with his fellowmen or live in isolation, because the frightful darkness of loneliness would make his life grim and unbearable, and make his spirit languish in solitary confinement. If

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.Jagot, Persian trans. "Talqin be-nafs," pp. ٢١٢-٢١٣ -١

.Ghurar al-hikam, p. ٣٤٧ -٢

one did not have ties of friendship and love with anyone and were one to feel that there isn't a single heart in the whole world that throbs for him and that one can find no emotional refuge, one would be in deep anguish and the skies of one's being would become dark and gloomy.

On the other hand, in the same way that the body needs various kinds of nourishment for its health and strength, our souls also draw their nourishment from the company of friends, often acquiring virtues and merits from them, and at times becoming tainted with their vices and sins.

Everyone has strong feelings of attachment for the way that he has chosen in life. He also desires others to adopt it and tries to create, through those with whom he associates, an environment for himself that is harmonious and pleasant. Regarding the world through the window of his world outlook, he gives a certain hue and perspective to its problems, and actually tries to find justification for the way that he has chosen for himself. Obviously he would find any opposition to his chosen lifestyle to be very painful.

Accordingly, the character of one's company and the understanding of its limits is something on which our happiness profoundly depends. It is by the means of fruitful social contacts we cultivate today that our future spiritual well-being and individual independence are secured. Hence it is necessary to understand one's psychological needs in the sphere of social relations, and,

.on the basis of these requirements, to carefully develop and follow a program

Some scholars believe that the tendency to emulate others is innate in the human nature. This tendency is so imperceptible that it is not so simple to discover its profound effects. The study of various situations relating to emulation indicates that one is influenced by others in one's conduct, feelings, decisions, and even in one's opinions and judgements. One tends to mould oneself in accordance with the principles subscribed to by one's community and group. Others influence one's development in proportion to their personal power and influence over one, and no matter how much a person may be educated and intelligent, a part of his independence vanishes in the company of other people and his personality is overshadowed by the spiritual domination and pressure of the beliefs of his community. Of course, those who suffer with spiritual inadequacies are more acutely susceptible to the influence of others, as their mental powers are relatively more .deficient

According to the view of a group of psychologists, a person emulates others when he finds a mental satisfaction in doing so, or because he imagines that his conduct would win the approval of others, or that such conduct has been the cause of others' success. For instance, the emulation of heroic figures, or children's imitation of the conduct of the elders, occurs for this reason. Even in animals it occurs under particular conditions when an animal imitates others when it achieves something by

.that means

:Brown says

People resort to imitating others when that helps them reach goals in the psychological sphere. In other words, the condition of latent urges leads to imitation, not that these goals are created by an urge called the urge to imitate. When a saleswoman adopts the hair-style of some celebrity, that is not because she is driven by an urge to imitate. Rather, the reason behind her action is that for her it is a means (to realise the lifestyle of that celebrity or other stars whom she represents.(١

Although special attention to the problem of social intercourse is necessary at all stages of life, it has a greater importance for the young who, having left behind the traits of childhood years, stand at the threshold of a serious career, in social life and relations. That is because, due to spontaneous emotional factors and passing motives, they are prone to being drawn into friendships and close relations without carefully examining the spiritual and moral condition of those with whom they associate or make friends and without evaluating their way of thinking and fitness for friendship. This lack of attention to what is reasonable and proper may divert the youth from the real highway of life and land him in corruption and vice. Accordingly, we should neither ignore their natural inclination for associating with persons of their age group, nor neglect the need for effective guidance and logical and well-reasoned advice, to make them resistant to influence of any kind of

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١- J. A. C. Brown, The Social Psychology of Industry, Persian trans. Rawanshendsi-ye ijtimaa'i, p. ٣٩٩.

vicious and destructive elements, so that they may grow in a way free from all kinds .of educational hazards

At this stage, which are tense years of unrest, the personality of the youth advances towards independence. The heroes whom he adulates and the persons whom he admires disclose his need for a guide, a model, and source of inspiration to be emulated. Similarly, the state of uncertainty and doubt that takes hold of his being derive from his inadequate intellectual power of judgement and his effort to obtain .mental independence

With attention to the fact that the youth has an innocent and receptive heart, as he passes through a period of passion and emotional excitement, one may well assess the magnitude of the big role played by his associates at this sensitive stage in the development of his spiritual and mental faculties. Accordingly, for the sake of precaution against any deviation, failing, and setback it is essential for them to be acquainted with the principles of healthy and fruitful company and to be guided .towards true personal development

True Worth of a Friend

In choosing a friend one must employ one's judgement in a manner free from emotion and try to find the criterion for assessing his real worth. One must know his inadequacies and weak points, his ideas, feelings, dislikes and infirmities. Ultimately, one must discover the human merits and desirable qualities that he carries in the depth of his spirit so that one may benefit from his outstanding virtues.

One may discover many sublime moral qualities in

persons whose outward appearance indicates no sign of their existence. Continuous contact and company of worthy and good-natured persons brings about remarkable changes in the constitution of one's personality. One's vital energies are directed in new channels, and they take a new form, forming one's faculty of will into a creative and innovative source of outstanding achievements. On the other hand, the lack of sufficient care and negligence in this regard can be the biggest mistake one can make, damaging seriously the foundations of one's felicity and welfare.

Avebury, a well-known British writer, says:

One is thrown in life with a great many people who, though not actively bad, though they may not wilfully lead us astray, yet take no pains with themselves, neglect their own minds, and direct the conversation to petty puerilities or mere gossip; who do not seem to realise that conversation may by a little effort be made instructive and delightful, without being in any way pedantic; or, on the other hand, may be allowed to drift into a mere morass of muddy thought and weedy words. There are few from whom we may not learn something, if only they will trouble themselves to tell us.(۱)

Sensitivity and Touchiness

One of the basic necessities of social life is learning to get along with other people. One can hardly find two persons who have beliefs, thoughts, and feelings that are identical in all respects. Even in regard to the most insignificant matters of life it is rare to find people who are in

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۱- John Lubbock Baron Avebury, On Peace and Happiness, Persian trans. Dar aghosh-e khushbakhti, p.p. ۶۶-۶۷.

complete agreement. This fact must always be kept in mind and one must try, so far as one can, to get along with different kinds of temperaments and personalities, so that one is able to adjust and develop friendly and harmonious relations with .associates and companions

Some individuals, due the lack of a certain degree of maturity necessary for social coexistence, are so sensitive and touchy and so rigid and unforgiving in their relations that they cannot overlook the smallest thing that happens against their expectations. A lapse on behalf of their friends makes them simply succumb to their violent and immature feelings, leading them to abandon all hopes of arriving at a mutual understanding. They allow good relations to be severed on account of a deep resentment and ill feeling. Life, however, has its bright and dark sides, thorns as well as flowers, beauty as well as ugliness, and these always go together. One's approach, from the outset of social life, should be based on pleasant manners and sound moral principles. One should learn the law of social life that it is necessary to bear some unpleasant things for the sake of its numerous advantages. At the same time, one should refrain from misplaced expectations and pursuing idle dreams. The art of living lies in being as flexible as one can in regard to one's expectations, and very often stable peaceful relations cannot be maintained and friendship and intimacy cannot .prevail without it

One should try to understand and accept people

and their needs as they are, not as we would like them to be. This depends on the measure of one's moral development, emotional refinement, and spirit of .understanding

It is a mistake to judge everything from the perspective of our own wishes and desires. But there are many people whose feelings are adversely lopsided; selfishness and egoism are so strong in their character that they totally lack the capacity to be objective. Moreover, thereby they torture and torment themselves, whereas objectivity and reasonable expectations would have secured them mental .peace

A psychiatrist recounts the tale of his inordinate expectations. During World War II, he wanted to leave his hometown for a distant city. Despite his insistence, they declined to give him an air ticket. They told him that priority lay with the transportation of army .personnel, and he was forced to go by the train and that, too, in the third class

A few moments after that I took my uncomfortable seat in the third- class" compartment," he says, "I felt furious. I saw that it was a torture for me to continue my journey on these hard benches. Immediately I began to analyse my perturbed state. After a while I asked myself whether the torture I felt was really due the uncomfortable seats, or if it was because I was upset that a respectable and dedicated psychiatrist like me had been denied the consideration of being favoured with an air ticket, so I wouldn't be compelled to waste hours of my

valuable time on journey by train. Then I asked myself if I had a right to expect such a favour during wartime and if my expecting them to be treat me as an exception was selfish and stupid. Immediately I realised that it was an unjustified expectation, because certainly at a time when my brothers were under the rain of bullets and .shells, their work had a priority over everything else

As soon as the matter thus cleared up in my mind and I was convinced that I should" not be upset, the hard seats not only did not bother me any longer, I spent the rest of the journey, happily reading or conversing with other passengers. I did not feel tired by the journey at all, although neither the seat had become softer, nor the duration of ".the journey had become shorter

At times, selfish and hollow people cultivate social relations for some particular purpose. Their relations and contacts with others, which should be untainted by personal gain and purpose, are meant to obtain some particular goals of their own. They continuously hunt for friends through whom they might make some personal gain. For instance, they would never seek the friendship of those who have sublime feelings and sincere intentions but whose company would not procure any material gain. As a result, their friendly relations are sustained so long as there is some hope of ,a gain. But if they do not get any nearer to their goal in this way

sensing that the friendship would not help them in achieving their ends, a peculiar coldness replaces the previous warmth and they terminate their hypocritical .relationship

Obviously, when unsteadiness and infirmity cloud all aspects of someone's social life, the reality is gradually exposed and others, too, on recognising such a character, treat him coldly and contemptuously and avoid him. And this is an injurious spiritual .condition that we often observe among many people

:Emerson says

We pass for what we are. Character teaches above our wills. Men imagine that they communicate their virtue or vice only by overt actions, and do not see that virtue or .vice emit a breath every moment

There will be an agreement in whatever variety of actions, so they be each honest and natural in their hour. For of one will, the actions will be harmonious, however unlike they seem. These varieties are lost sight of at a little distance, at a little height of thought. One tendency unites them all. The voyage of the best ship is a zigzag line of a hundred tracks. See the line from a sufficient distance, and it straightens itself to the average tendency Your genuine action will explain your other genuine actions.(١)

A Warning Against Corrupt Company

In general there exist two alternatives for man, either to surrender totally to his corporal and natural faculties and subjugate his soul absolutely to his instincts and appetites, or to answer the summons of his higher spiritual aspirations and to cultivate the higher part of his spirit and realise the vital significance

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١- Emerson, "Self-reliance," cf. Commins Linscott, The Social Philosophers (New York: Modern Pocket Library ١٩۵۴), p. ٣٩٩.

.of this precious gift

Man is constantly under the pull of the two opposite poles of virtue and vice. Therefore, he should pay undivided attention to the great mission that he has to fulfil in this inner conflict. He should select for himself a way that is worthy of man and choose the most reliable means for attaining his high human goal in order to realise .the full significance of life

This choice is something continuous and perpetual, and it should be made in such a way that at every moment one makes a forward movement as long as one is alive without either coming to a standstill or going back. In view of the brevity of human life, that which is important is to obtain a worthy provision out of this brief, transitory existence for the life of the next world, which is everlasting. Without doubt, one would derive the most lasting and precious benefit by dominating destructive desires and by .refraining from submitting to deviant urges

Islam wishes to develop a capacity for discernment and bring about an inner discipline in the human mind by making people reflect on the significance of social intercourse and selection of one's companions. It desires to habituate people to observance of discipline in their activities and decisions. Besides, in this manner it draws their attention to real human merit so that they come to have in it a faith arising from the depths of their hearts, perpetually keeping the higher planes of reality in their

view to attain to the utmost human perfection, a perfection whose worth cannot be .measured by any materialistic criteria

Islam has pointed out to man each of the two paths of human progress and edification, the outward and the inward, and it is now up to him to utilise that guidance .in choosing his mode of thinking and formulating his approach in action

The company of pious persons committed to moral and human considerations provides an appropriate opportunity for the nourishment and growth of man's spiritual faculties. Minds grow and develop in the radiance of their sublime thoughts and the inclination to virtue and piety is awakened in one's mind. As a result of personal contact with them, one becomes more conscious of one's spiritual inadequacies, and that provides one with the chance to judge one's own capabilities .by comparing them with those of worthy and competent humans

It is through such a comparison that one can gradually free oneself from the influence of vicious and undesirable qualities, and derive light from the most hidden depths of one's soul. The significance of the moral and spiritual qualities of one's associates is not something which has been studied for the first time by modern psychology. In fact, the necessity of identifying the qualities of friends and one's intimates has been recognised for centuries, and this is dealt with clearly and abundantly in religious texts and traditions. What modern psychology has done is to reaffirm the value of those profound prescriptions and to reiterate the

beneficial and fruitful guiding principles that have been recognised since long in this .regard

The Prophet of Islam, may God bless him and his Household, declared in an eloquent :and absorbing statement of his

Persons follow the ways and conduct of their friends. Hence everybody should be careful in choosing his friends, and study the character of those with whom he wishes (to develop terms of friendship.(١

In one of his aphorisms, Imam 'Ali, may Peace be upon him, points out that one should avoid associating with degenerate persons, as one tends to pick up their personal :traits

Avoid the company of the vicious, because your character would pick up their (degenerate and deviant qualities without your knowing it.(٢

:Dr. Alexis Carrel, the well-known scholar, writes

The psychological state of the social group determines, in a large measure, the number, the quality, and the intensity of the manifestations of individual consciousness. If the social environment is mediocre intelligence and moral sense fail to develop. These activities may become thoroughly vitiated by bad surroundings. We are immersed in the habits of our epoch, like tissue cells in the organic fluids; like these cells, we are incapable of defending ourselves against the influence of the community. The body more effectively resists the cosmic than the psychological world. It is guarded against the incursions of its physical and chemical enemies by the skin, and the digestive and respiratory mucosas. On the contrary, the frontiers of the mind are entirely open. Consciousness is thus exposed to the attacks of its

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.Al-Nuri, Mustadrak al-Wasail ii, p. ۶٢ -١

.Ibn Abi al-Hadid, Sharh Nahj al-balaghah, xx, p. ٢٧٢ -٢

intellectual and spiritual surroundings. According to the natures of these attacks, it .develops in a normal or defective manner

The education of the intelligence is relatively easy. But the formation of the moral, aesthetic, and religious activities is very difficult. The influence of environment on .these aspects of consciousness is much more subtle

Man is powerless against such psychological attacks. He necessarily yields to the influence of his group. If one lives in the company of criminals or fools, one becomes a (criminal or a fool.(۱

In the course of their experiments, social psychologists have made interesting .findings on the tendency to imitate others

In the spring of ۱۹۵۳, a group of hundred male candidates applying for managerial jobs involving leadership qualities ere subjected to a three- day test in order to .evaluate their mental abilities in the psychology lab of the University of California

On the third day, it was the turn to precisely measure their personal susceptibility to the influence of others. First, these hundred men were divided into two groups of fifty, the group under test and the group of spectators. The purpose was that when those in the test group were subjected to the influence of the opinion of the group, each of the individuals in the group of spectators was individually and independently tested in relation to the opinion of their group. Then arrangements were made to divide the test group into ten subgroups of five. There was a device in front of each individual so that when a question

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۱- Alexis Carrel, Man the Unknown (Bombay: Wilco Publishing Co.), pp. ۱۴۶,۱۴۷,۱۴۹.

was put to him he could know the result of the answers given by others in his group by the means of special lamps.

However, the secret of the experiment lay in the point that the answer that appeared on the board was one manipulated by the experimenter, not one that reflected the group's response. In fact, in every case, by creating an artificial and arbitrary majority the experimenter duped those who were under test, and they, unaware of this secret, thought what they saw on the board to be the opinion of the majority, and mostly followed it blindly.

To the astonishment of the experimenters, in a case involving the solution of a mathematical problem, seventy-nine per cent of men thoughtlessly followed the incorrect and illogical answer of the hoax majority.(۱)

Helping the Victims of Vicious Company

One should know that if one associates with corrupt persons for the sake of rescuing them from their wretched condition, it is something very commendable and praiseworthy. Islam approves of the method of associating with persons who have violated moral norms for the purpose of helping them through beneficial guidance. However, such a task requires a sophisticated approach, since mere reproach and censure will not give the desired results. In many cases, it would not be effective. However, a careful approach will not only be effective in most cases, it might bring about a positive change. For the awareness that is created in the victim may lead him to strive towards the path of real humanity, piety, and salvation. That might

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۱- Gardner Murphy, Persian trans. by Sahib-zamani, Raz-e karishmaha, p. ۳۹

lead him to discover his real worth and dignity as a human being, and the one who keeps him company for the sake of helping him would have fulfilled the rights of companionship in the worthiest manner.

Imam Sadiq, may Peace be upon him, has said in this regard:

When someone observes a friend taking a wrong and sinful course and, while possessing the capacity restrain him, does not so out of indifference, he has actually betrayed his friend.(1)

It is has been said since ancient times that it is unpleasant to be told about one's faults. This is a fact. However, sympathetic advice should be given in a soft and gentle tone, and someone's weak point or moral inadequacy should be pointed out in an effective manner, suggesting in a friendly way that the path selected is one that would result in misfortune and ruin. At the same time one should try to secure the companion s confidence in one's objective attitude, while being careful to deliver one s counsels privately in a manner unnoticed others.

A friend may point out someone's shortcomings in an unwise manner and his exhortations may produce the very opposite result, whereas an advice given in a wise and skilful manner, even by someone himself suffering from some moral infirmity, can prove to be fruitful.

Imam 'Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, may Peace be upon him, makes this points in the following manner:

Pointing out someone's shortcomings publicly is censure, not advice.(2)

At times one is betrayed by the

۱- Bihar al-anwar, xv, "kitab al-'ishrah," p. ۵۲.

۲- Al-Amidi, Ghurar al-hikam, p. ۷۷۵.

advice of a trusted friend, and the advice of someone of whose betrayal one is wary may prove to be effective.(۱)

Dale Carnegie says:

If you want to prove a point, act cleverly and skilfully so that no one guesses what you have in mind. Use the advice of the poet who said, "Preach without being anyone knowing that you are preaching." The people who have a power of clear judgement are a rarity. Most of us are stubborn and prejudiced, and envy, suspicion, fear, greed, and pride cloud our reason Study your own character; if you see that most of the time you are after picking others' faults, you must start thinking of a remedy.

When we make a mistake, we would easily admit it to ourselves. Others, too, if they have the ability and skill, can, with the sweetness of their speech, grace, and charm induce us to confess our errors. In such cases, we might even congratulate ourselves for our candour and courage in confessing to our shortcomings. But if the other person were to attempt to compel us to make this unpleasant admission, he would never succeed. (۲)

The Eleventh Imam, may Peace be upon him, said:

One who exhorts his brother privately in fact helps him to appear in a good light, whereas one who exhorts him publicly and indiscreetly spoils his image.(۳)

On the other hand, when someone suffering from an infirmity is exhorted by a far-sighted friend who seeks to rescue him from moral degeneration, it is essential for

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۱- Ibid., p. ۵۸۷.

۲- Dale Carnegie, How to Win Friends, Persian trans. A'in-e dastyabi, pp. ۱۵۶,۱۵۹,۱۶۱.

۳- Al-Harrani, Tuhaf al-'uqul, p. ۴۸۹.

him accept the well-meaning advice of his friend and to make an effort to reform himself. Imam 'Ali, may Peace be upon him, said:

Someone who exhorts you is your well-wisher and benefactor. He foresees the consequences of your conduct, and seeks to restore what you have lost. Therefore, your welfare lies in obeying his counsel, and any disobedience or indifference to his fruitful guidance will be ruinous for you.(۱)

On noticing the traces of moral corruption, the sooner one can correct oneself, the better it is for him, and any kind of delay and negligence in this regard will lead to regret and, ultimately, might be ruinous for his repute and personal dignity.

Imam 'Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, has said in this regard:

One who does not get rid of his infirmities while he is still held in good repute will be forced to remove them after falling into disrepute. (۲)

Not only the admonishment of one's associates but also the criticism of one's enemies can be effective in making one mend his ways. Imam 'Ali, may Peace be upon him, said:

At times one's enemy is more helpful than one's friends, because he makes one aware of his shortcomings, leading one to overcome them.

An American philosopher writes:

A great man is always willing to be little. Whilst he sits on the cushion of advantages, he goes to sleep. When he is pushed, tormented, defeated, he has a chance to learn something; he has been put on his wits, on his manhood; he has

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۱- Al-Amidi, Ghurar al-hikam, p. ۷۶۵.

۲- Ibid., p. ۶۴۱.

gained facts; learns his ignorance; is cured of the insanity of conceit; has got moderation and real skill. The wise man throws himself on the side of his assailants. It is more his interest than it is theirs to find his weak point. The wound cicatrises and falls off from him like a dead skin, and when they would triumph, Lo! he has passed on invulnerable. Blame is safer than praise. I hate to be defended in a newspaper. As long as all that is said is said against me, I feel a certain assurance of success. But as soon as honeyed words of praise are spoken for me I feel as one that lies unprotected before his enemies. In general, every evil to which we do not succumb is a benefactor. As the Sandwich Islander believes that the strength and valour of the enemy he kills passes into himself, so we gain the strength of the temptation we resist.(۱)

Of the most injurious is the company of stupid persons, which might bring about a setback in one's life and land one in misfortune. At times, the dangers and harms arising from a foolish friend are greater than what an enemy might inflict. That is because one is seldom on his guard against a friend on account of one's confidence and goodwill and might be easily taken by surprise, and when he wakes up there might be no way of retreat, whereas one is on his guard against the possible dangers

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۱ - Emerson, "Compensation," cf. Commins Linscott, The Social Philosophers New York: Modern Pocket Library (۱۹۵۴), p. ۴۵۱.

.of an enemy

His wrong judgements which lead his friend into trouble might be due to goodwill and a desire to be useful, but often his counsels land his friends in trouble and bring loss of .face

There is an ancient tale that once an intelligent and wise person went on a journey with a fool. While travelling they reached a place where the road branched out into two directions. One way was smooth and level and the other was rough and uneven. The foolish companion insisted that they take the better road. The wise man knew that the rugged road was shorter and safer, and he suggested to his companion that they take it. However, he submitted to the insistence of the fool and both of them .went along on the good road

Shortly afterwards, they encountered a band of robbers and were taken captive. Later on, the two friends were captured along with the robbers and taken before the judge. The wise man told the judge what had happened, putting the blame on his .foolish companion for misleading him and forcing him to take the dangerous road

When it was the fool's turn to defend himself, he admitted that he was merely a fool. But, he said, his friend who was intelligent should not have yielded to a fool's suggestions and abandon a decision made wisely. After hearing them the judge .condemned each of them to a similar punishment

Hence mere attachment and loyalty in mutual relations are not sufficient grounds for the

selection of a friend. Rather, the quality and degree of his wisdom should be given the foremost importance. Undoubtedly, those who refrain from cultivating the intimacy of fools should be ranked with wise men of foresight.

Imam 'Ali, may Peace be upon him, said:

(Never make someone who is brainless your friend.(۱)

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir, may Peace be upon him, speaks in these words of the harms that result from improper associates and unworthy company:

Never associate with four kinds of persons and don't make them your friends: the fool, the niggardly, the coward, and the liar. As to the fool, he will bring you harm despite his good intentions to do something for your benefit. As to the niggardly man, he will only grab from you without giving you anything in return. As to the coward, he will flee at the smallest danger abandoning not only you but even his own parents to their fate. As to the liar, you cannot trust him even if he tells the truth.(۲)

Mental immaturity and inattention to consequences lead one into bad company and ultimately into a catastrophe. It is frequently observed that those who give in to the temptations of their vicious friends and compromise their honour and well-being by attending their sinful gatherings and parties fall into ruin.

They might be aware that they are treading a dangerous path, but they are afraid lest they be considered timid or prude. In order to avoid this charge they surrender without resisting to the insistence and demands of

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۱- Al-Amidi, Ghurar al-hikam, p. ۸۰۰.

۲- Bihar al-anwar, xv, ' kitab al-'ishrah," p. ۵۲.

their vicious friends and ultimately bring disgrace upon themselves and fall headlong into the ravine of moral corruption and abasement. However, one day they would realise their irreparable mistake and their thoughtlessness, which was merely a product of their mimicking others and without foresight. But unfortunately this realisation comes when they have already spent a considerable part of their lives and after a precious lifetime has been ruined by vicious conduct. At times, their state of negligence and inattention continues to the end of their lives and they are left with an .everlasting regret

The Noble Qur'an mentions the wails of regret as uttered by a lost and sinful person :on the Day of Resurrection. He would say

(Woe to me! Had I never taken so and so for my intimate friend. (۲۵:۲۸

Imam 'Ali, The Commander of Faithful, may Peace be upon him, warns in these words against associating with a certain group of people who are unfit for company and :whose friendship is to be avoided

Avoid making friends with worldly people, who will start looking down upon you once your wealth and means are diminished and who will be jealous of you if you become (wealthier.(۱

Do not keep company with someone who remembers your vices and forgets your (merits and excellences.(۲

(Do not befriend someone who conceals your merits and publicises your faults.(۳

Do not take a flatterer for your friend, who will make even your erroneous acts (appear in a good light and who wants you to be like him.(۴

Should you know

.Al-Amidi, Ghurar al-hikam, p. ۸۱۲ -۱

.Ibid., p. ۸۲۷ -۲

.Ibid., p. ۸۲۷ -۳

.Ibid., p. ۷۰۷ -۴

it, the company of someone who is of no avail to you in acquiring spiritual and human merits is an encumbrance.(1)

Moderation in Friendship

The policy of the wise and the foresighted is to observe certain criteria and exercise caution in friendly relations. Immoderation in this regard may lead to deplorable consequences and bring regret and pain. That is because the bond of friendship and intimacy might not endure under all conditions and circumstances.

Perhaps some event or a rivalry might lead to disagreement and tension in relations and vitiate cordial and sympathetic terms of friendship. Warm and intimate terms of friendship have often turned into violent enmity and fiery hostility due to such matters, and there are not few who have faced merciless attacks of an old friend familiar with one's secrets and weak points, whereas earlier none of them ever expected such a painful reversal in mutual relations.

However, a friendship founded upon wisdom and moderation would not only be free of such dangers, it would be stable and enduring. It is with such a subtle consideration in view that Imam Sadiq, may Peace be upon him, strictly warned his disciples against immoderation in friendly relations and the disclosure of one's secret matters:

Don't inform your friends of your secret matters except those whose disclosure to your enemy would be harmless. That is because in the vicissitudes of life today's friend might be tomorrow's enemy.(2)

A Western Scholar writes in this regard.

It has been said that it is wise always to treat a friend, remembering that

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1- Ibid., p. ٨١٢.

2- Al-Hurr al-'Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, "al-ahkam al-mu'asharah," bab ١٠١.

he may become an enemy, and an enemy, remembering that he may become a friend; and whatever may be thought of the first part of the adage, there is certainly much wisdom in the latter.(۱)

An advice of Imam 'Ali, may Peace be upon him, which is full of wisdom is to be observed in this regard also:

Be moderate in your friendly relations, for today's friend might be tomorrow's enemy. And be moderate in your hostility towards your enemy, for today's enemy be tomorrow's friend.(۲)

Pretence and Hypocrisy

Perhaps everyone has come across in his social surroundings persons who chum up with everybody, but their only goal is to attract others' attention to themselves, although their hearts are devoid of any fraternal feeling. They hide their real face under the mask of friendship and take resort in flattery and affected geniality. As and when required by circumstances, they consider their pretence to genuineness a means of achieving their social ends, and that is their trade. This hidden tendency overshadows their entire character, conduct, and mind. They forget that a real personal merit is a thousand times or incomparably more precious than others' opinion about oneself. When one observes such people, striving hard single-mindedly in pursuit of their selfish ends instead of responding to the call of their own conscience, one realises to what extent they are victims of their exhibitionist urges.

Others' opinion is not so significant as to be allowed to influence one's happiness. Of course, the opinions and feelings of other people are to

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۱- Avebury, On Peace and Happiness, Persian trans., Dar aghosh-e khushbakhti, p. ۶۶

۲- Al-Hurr al-'Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, "al-ahkam al-mu'asharah," bab ۱۰۱.

be respected to a certain extent, but the source of one's happiness lies within oneself, not in what others may think of one. Otherwise if one were to become used to the habit of looking at oneself from the eyes of others, he would become a hapless captive of other people's ideas, losing one's freedom and independence.

Moreover, the judgements that people make concerning one another are mostly inspired by their personal interests and prejudices, and they change with conditions and circumstances. The value of such judgements would be realised when we keep this point in our view. ' Hence if one chooses a correct path in life that is not regarded by others with approval, one should not be pained by their futile critical remarks.

Imam 'Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, may Peace be upon him, said:

Don't be grieved by the remarks that people may make about you, because if what they say is true, you will have been reattributed for your misconduct in this world itself [instead of the Hereafter] and if what they say is untrue, it is a reward that you got without having worked for it.(١)

Bertrand Russell says:

Fear of public opinion, like every other form of fear, is oppressive and stunts growth It is difficult to achieve any kind of greatness while a fear of this kind remains strong, and it is impossible to acquire that freedom of spirit in which true happiness consists, for it is essential to happiness that our way of living should

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١- Al-Amidi, Ghurar al-hikam, p. ٨٢٠.

spring from our own deep impulses and not from the accidental tastes and desires of those who happen to be our neighbours, or even our relations.(١)

William John Reilly, an American writer, says in this regard:

There is no one more lacking in personality and content than the self- seeking people who are inert and impassive They are always curious as to what other people think of them, and therefore are ever after something that may be regarded by others with approval

This sort of persons actually sacrifice their personality and will to the collective prejudices of others if you allow yourself to be influenced by others beyond measure, you will never find the courage to accomplish anything, and will not succeed in life

Of course, this does not mean that one should totally ignore the useful and well-meaning suggestions of others and not put them to use. However, that which is to be remembered is that one should accept and act upon only those suggestions which one believes to be more worthwhile and useful and those which offer a more complete and sound solution

If you follow the prejudice and personal preferences of others you will be confronted with a social quandary and personal misfortune On the other hand, if you are steadfast in regard to your ideas that you believe to be useful, you will feel relaxed, strong, independent, and self-assured. The futile pursuit of others' prejudices and judgements will mar whatever significant inspiration and valuable idea that you may have, divesting you

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١- Bertrand Russell, The Conquest of Happiness (London: Unwin Books ١٩٧۵), p. ١٠۶.

totally of your personal liberty, independence, and personality, and you will never be able to be your own self. If you give up your freedom of thought, you will lose .everything

The state, circumstances and beliefs of people are changeable and conflicting in societies The more you strive to achieve general approval, the lesser results will you obtain, and the lesser attention you pay to it and avoid submitting to it, the more it will incline towards you The world, by nature, admires men who have the courage to decide for themselves and have a strong determination.(١)

Isolation and Unsociability

One of the causes of social isolation and unsociability is the feeling of resentment towards people which results in a stunted emotional and social personality. The dream of amicable relations is changed into a nightmare of despair and inability to .socialise with others

:Imam 'Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, may Peace be upon him said

One who is always distrustful of others' motives develops a phobia of everyone.(٢)

:Schachter, the well-known psychologist, writes

Everyone likes to socialise with others and aspires to receive their attention and love and enjoy their company But when this wish is not satisfied, it seems easier to flee from people than to adjust, whereas the truth is something else If the failure to adjust and avoidance of the company of others provide a temporary relief, it neither satisfies our innate urge and need nor does it offer any solution or remedy

Isolation and fleeing from people may have various degrees, and it may reach

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١- William John Reilly, Twelve Rules of or Straight Thinking, Persian trans. Taf akkur-e sahih, p. ١٢٢.

.Al-Amidi, Ghurar al-hikam, p. ٧١٢ -٢

the point where, out of despair and a sense of defeat, one distances oneself from his .friends, family, and the whole world

I used to know an engineer who was highly qualified and had complete mastery over his profession But in the factory he behaved with outright dryness and brutality with his subordinates He would eat alone and did not participate in conversation, nor would he take part in their amusements. Laughter or humour never came out of his .mouth and he would not allow anyone to be critical of him

But we knew that in the depth of his heart he underwent a torment on account of his state and conduct, and that he longed to be able to converse with others, laugh and dine with them at the same table, and to be on friendly and fraternal terms with others. When the professor of psychology studied his case, it was known that, without himself knowing it, he was suspicious of the loyalty of his subordinates and imagined that they did not consider him fit to lead them, and therefore he had to impose his (authority upon them in a brutal manner.(۱

Books, Precious Companions

One can have a friend and companion even when one is alone and relaxing in solitude. These companions are books that provoke one to think upon matters that contribute to one's mental growth and edification. By reflecting upon the writings of great men, who passed away centuries ago, we become familiar with their valuable thoughts and their wisdom and profit

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.Rushd-e shakhsiyyat; p. ۱۱۱ -۱

from their teachings. The wonderful advancements and progress made by man in the various sciences and arts is not the result of a sudden leap, but the product of his experience through long eras of history as the knowledge and the sciences of earlier generations was transmitted to succeeding ones by the means of books and writings. Although the illustrious lives of great thinkers lie concealed behind a curtain of darkness and uncertainty, the essence of their thought and work has been preserved in the safe custody of books. It is as if the study of these works allows one to travel a distance of several centuries to become acquainted with outstanding human beings, who are now gone, and discover great truths by exploring the vast panorama of their works. One of the advantages of reading is that everyone, rich or poor, can equally benefit from the company of great minds and spend one's time with great heroes, and all that is needed to enter their company is the license of literacy. Reading can be a good means of relief from loneliness and bring peace of mind.

Imam 'Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, may Peace be upon him, says:

One who derives consolation from books will never lose his peace of mind.(١)

One who pursues knowledge in solitude is never scared of loneliness.(٢)

A European scholar writes:

The debt we owe to books was well expressed by Richard de Bury, Bishop of Durham, author of Philobiblon, written as long as ١٣۴۴, published in

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١- Al-Amidi, Ghurar al-hikam, p. ۶٣٢.

٢ - Avebury, On Peace and Happiness, Persian trans., Dar aghosh-e kaushbakhti, pp.۴۶-۴۴٨

and the earliest treatise on the delights of literature. "There," he says, "are the ,۱۴۷۳ masters who instruct us without hard words and anger, without clothes or money. If you approach them, they are not asleep; if investigating you interrogate them, they conceal nothing; if you mistake them, they never grumble; if you are ignorant, they cannot laugh at you. The library, therefore, of wisdom is more precious than all riches, and nothing that can be wished for is worthy to be compared with it. Whosoever therefore acknowledges himself to a zealous follower of truth, of happiness, of "… wisdom, of science, or even faith, must of necessity make himself a lover of books

This feeling that books are real friends is constantly present to all who love reading. "I have friends," said Petrarch, "whose society is extremely agreeable to me; they are of all ages, and of every country. They have distinguished themselves both in the cabinet and in the field, and obtained high honours for their knowledge of the sciences. It is easy to gain access to them, for they are always at my service, and I admit them to my company, and dismiss them from it, whenever I please. They are never troublesome, but immediately answer every question I ask them. Some relate to me the events of the past ages, while others reveal to me how to live, and others how to die. Some, by their vivacity, drive away may cares and exhilarate my spirits; while others

give fortitude to my mind, and teach me the important lesson how to restrain my desires, and to depend wholly on myself. They open to me, in short, the various avenues of all the arts and sciences, and upon their information I may safely rely in all " .emergencies

Books," says Jermy Collier, "are a guide in youth and entertainment for age. They" support us under solitude and keep us from being a burden to ourselves. They help us to forget the grossness of men and things; compose our cares and our passions; and lay our disappointments asleep. When we are weary of the living, we repair to the dead, who have nothing of peevishness, pride, or design in their conversation."(۱)

Even the study of the biographies of eminent figures who have brought about fruitful changes in the world and changed the course of human destiny is not without a formative influence on one's mind and soul. It can reveal to one the meaning of life and initiate him into outstanding spiritual virtues. If historic events and the character and conduct of everlasting personalities are so absorbing and fascinating for the reader, that is because of their intimate relationship and bond with the thoughts and feelings of the great men who authored them. In the same way as the moral character of every person can be judged through the character of his friends and associates, so also one's selection of books and one's interests provides a clue to one's intellectual and spiritual

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۱- Raymond Beach, Persian trans. by Banu Munir Mehran, Ma wa farzandan-e ma p. ۸۳.

calibre and character. In the same way as one should be careful in the selection of friends to avoid the dangers of inappropriate company, so also a great care is to be exercised in the choice of books. That is because the study of improper material is not only without benefit, their toxic effects poison ours ideas and vitiate the purity of .one's soul

This is especially true of the young people, who have not acquired moral maturity and stability. Their minds are impressionable and they readily digest the contents of such .books, subjecting themselves to the danger of deviance and degeneration

Unfortunately, these days barren and misleading published material, whose evil and harmful influence on youth is not at all hidden, has acquired great currency. These books are like invisible robbers who enter the privacy of one's mind and soul and, with a surprising alacrity, devastate the foundations of one's faith and human merit Mostly base and vulgar writings form part of the means of amusement of young people, and that is the reason why there is an increasing tendency among them to a fantastic approach towards life. For this group of people, that which matters is not the educative content and impact of a book but its soporific and intoxicating power, as is the case with many novels and much fiction. These make their basic conditions for the selection of a book. Obviously, when the material one reads is not selected with care and insight, and amusement and sexual excitement

is the only end of reading, apart from the time wasted, that would result in moral degeneration and ruin of one's constructive faculties

:Raymond Beach, a Western psychologist, says

The matter of reading should be given careful attention by the youth Although all sorts of newspapers, and various weekly, monthly and other periodicals make up the most important source of reading by the youth today, it must said that we come across fewer outstanding minds and ideas than in the past

When boys and girls select light and nonsensical material for reading, they gradually lose sight of that which is beautiful, valuable and sublime in life Bad books incite feelings of anger, rage, and excitement in the reader and bring him to the verge of moral degeneration These books enfeeble the will, create intellectual torpor, and .debase spiritual life

The study of worthy and beneficial books, besides giving a special clarity to one's insight, may even open a new chapter in one's life, giving a new direction and impetus to one's energies and efforts and bringing one's spiritual personality to a definite fruition There are many people who have obtained their moral and spiritual vigour and power from this plenteous and fecund source and have been drawn towards .personal sublimity and edification

Thomas Hood writes

My born interest and attachment to books rescued my life from foundering in the vortex of ignorance and moral ruin in the early years of my life, though someone like me who had been deprived of the blessing of parental care

.and sympathy in childhood years can rarely escape this frightful danger

My books restrained me from getting involved in gambling, drinking and visiting improper places Truly, it is impossible for anyone who benefits from the precious and sublime ideas of great men to incline towards the company of base and frivolous (characters.(١

Chapter ١٣: Success, a Human Right

point

The brilliant achievements of world's historic men as well as the amazing progress made by humanity in all the various technical, economic and social fields, have all been achieved through self- reliance and perseverance. Without self-confidence one cannot attain one's cherished goals and nothing worthwhile can be achieved without faith in one's capacities. Only with faith in one's success can goals be achieved, for this .faith is the first step on the path of success

Every undertaking is the result of one's determination, confidence, and ideas, and should these be deficient or inconsequential, the results would also be insignificant. One should not enclose one's mind within the confines of a single activity, big or small. Rather, every task, regardless of its magnitude, should be carried out with self-reliance and utmost care and sincerity. In every society there are self-made persons who, in the struggle of life, employ their inner merits and spiritual resources to pursue their high human goals. The more this original human-source is tapped, the more abundantly does it flow, and it is their timely use and the superior qualities of these individuals that put them in the rank of outstanding and great men, bringing them remarkable

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١- Akhlaq-e Samuel, p. ١٢۴.

.success in different stages of life

The lack of hope and inner strength leads to personal stagnation and degeneration. Those who do not rely on their determination and effort and pin their hopes on others for securing material and spiritual happiness always need the support of some strong person. The doors of success remain closed for them and they are continually driven .back by the advancing waves of life

If the lack of self-confidence, which is the sign of belief in one's incapacity to perform tasks, were to take root in someone's mind, it would be rendered incapable of getting to the heart of anything. Such a person's power of thought would be paralysed and .one cannot expect him at all to attain any kind of human perfection and sublimity

How often it happens that outstanding capacities and talents die in their infancy as a result of lack of self-confidence, and how often edifying and brilliant aspirations remain sterile and unproductive for this reason! Someone with an average capacity but with an undefeatable determination and self- confidence can be many times more successful than one with outstanding abilities but possessing a shaky will and lacking self-confidence. That is because such a person is unable to mobilise his powers which might enable him to overcome obstacles and release the energies required for .consistent effort and necessary for resolving complex and difficult situations

There are many people who possess only an average level of abilities, but who advance in life and succeed brilliantly due to their

spirit of self- confidence. In critical situations they take resort in their genuine inner powers in order to rescue themselves from dangers and thus remain unharmed by .this means

As a principle, difficult times of crisis become turning points in the lives of such persons, creating a positive and stable power within their minds, and anything that strengthens one's determination and will would undermine the negative forces that .are harmful to one's self-confidence and activity

Someone who reaches a firm decision with all his being will avoid negative thoughts with all his power, and he will resist any false idea of weakness and inadequacy. Nothing can make him abandon the correct path and goal that he has chosen and has faith in its being the right path. He has a firm faith that God does not deprive anyone from attaining the means of success and felicity, and he believes that deprivation and inability are products of the human mind. That is because it is a human right to attain success, and achievement of a goal is definite if pursued with a positive and .constructive frame of mind and with faith and discipline

:Dr. Marden, a Western scholar, says

Faith and self-confidence are a creative, constructive, and positive force while the lack of faith is a negative, retarding, and destructive force. Self-conscience removes doubt and vacillation and allows One to Advance firmly without halting and without spending extra energy. All inventors, reformers, explorers, discoverers, warriors and .victors have had faith in their ability and power

On the contrary, if we were to study the personality of weak and defeated persons, .we will find that most of them have lacked self-confidence and steadiness

We do not know what kind of gifts God has bestowed upon persons who possess the ability to perform great tasks. All that we know is that the absolute confidence of a human being in the success of his work is a prominent sign of his ability. Those whom God has equipped with the weapon of absolute faith, He also assists them in succeeding in their efforts. Never lose your self-confidence, and do not permit others to shake it, because it is the basis of all your big achievements. Should this foundation be damaged, the superstructure will also collapse, and should it remain intact, the (doors of hope will always remain open.(١

One's way of thinking is contagious, and its reflections have a great effect on the lives of other people as well as on various social relationships. If courage and confidence were to prevail over one's thoughts, one would carry along one's self-confidence and self-assurance wherever one went. On the contrary, if doubt and uncertainty were to overshadow one's mind and should one's self-assurance be nil, one's weakness will .also spread to others' minds

Some people have the capacity to poison the entire atmosphere around themselves. They infuse doubt and uncertainty into the minds of other people who have the capacity to grow into free and happy human beings. Persons with a negative bent of

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.Marden, Orison Swett, The Victorious Attitude , Persian trans., Piruzl-ye fikr, p. ٨٣ -١

mind are like weeds in society who do not perform any function except weakening the creative spirit of others. It is natural that when there are a large number of such people in an environment, not only happiness and success will not flourish in it, but also self-confidence and determination will be cast into oblivion and there will be a .general lack of interest in anything vital

On the other hand, life become quite intolerable for the dynamic people who are forced into direct and continuous contact with such people. They feel light and relieved as soon as they get a chance to get away from them, as if a great burden has .been removed from their shoulders

You come across another group of people in society who have grown up to be such weaklings that they lack the determination to accomplish the simplest of tasks. Even at critical movements when they are required to take an irreversible decision in a situation which can give a new direction to their lives, they become so agitated and shaky that they immediately change their decisions at the smallest criticism from .someone, however logical and correct it might have been

Fears of failure and inability prompt them to give up and surrender immediately and unconditionally under the influence of others' remarks and suggestions without carefully examining them. As a result they leave unfinished even the tasks that they begin. Without doubt this great spiritual deficiency will not bring anything except retardation and stagnation in life, confining

.it within narrow limits

The greater the degree of one's self-confidence, the more is the amount of confidence placed by others in one, as the influence one has on others depends on one's self-assurance and the strength of one's faith in one's capacities. If you have self-assurance and are confident of your abilities, you can acquire the confidence of those who come into contact with you. But as soon as your self-confidence is shaken and doubt and hesitation take hold of your mind, you will immediately find others losing their faith in you. Ultimately, any move on your part, whether it is inspired by .self-assurance or doubt, will be echoed back to you in the form of others' reaction

Depending on Misleading Hopes

In the same way that self-assurance and reliance on one's efforts and perseverance for the sake of attaining one's goal are the biggest factors behind success, so also depending on baseless hopes and cherishing unrealistic aspirations in one's heart, instead of effort and action, are the result of distancing oneself from realities of life. Sometimes certain pleasing desires and sweet fancies leave such a deep impression on one's mind that one gets captivated by impossible dreams, becoming unable to perceive facts and see realities. Such persons never succeed in attaining perfection :and felicity. 'Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, may Peace be upon him, said

Consider illusory hopes as false, and do not rely upon them. Such hopes are (misleading and one who entertains them falls victim to their deception.(١

One of the dangers of

.Al-Amidi, Ghurar al-hikam wa durar al-kalim, p. ١١٣ -١

relying on inappropriate and illusory expectations is that when they are shattered due to obstacles they give rise to a psychological complex in people. In one of his precious sayings Imam 'Ali, may Peace be upon him, considers failed expectations as one of the factors leading to psychological complexes. He says:

The feeling abasement and inferiority in men arises due to failed hopes and expectations.(۱)

The psychologists also consider defeat and failure as one of the important causes of an inferiority complex and a lack of self-assurance.

Perhaps no factor is more damaging to one's sense of self-respect than failure and blame for failure. Failure leads a person to consider himself inferior to others, and on facing defeat he begins to imagine that he is inferior to other people. Failure destroys self-assurance and as a result defeatism takes the place of self-confidence. Hence when children and young people face recurring failure. they feel humiliated and an inferiority complex is formed in them(۲)

A Lesson Taught by the Noble Messenger

One of the man-making methods of the Prophet of Islam, may God bless him and his Household, was to develop the spirit of self-assurance and self- reliance in his followers. In the shadow of the guidance and teachings of the Prophet, Muslims acquired a profound sense of self-confidence, a sublime courage, a firm determination, and superior ideals, instead of being swept away by ill-founded hopes and falling victim to ruinous appetites. They would continually seek God's support in all their actions and activities by paying continuous attention to the Source of

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۱- Ibid., p. ۴۰۵.

۲ - Marguerite Malm Herbert Sorenson, Psychology for Living, Persian trans., Rawanshenasi baraye zistan, pp. ۲۴۷-۲۵۲.

.all virtue

One of the companions of the Prophet (S) was once faced with great hardship due to poverty. One day he felt that could not bear it anymore and the cup of his patience was full. After consulting his wife he decided to visit the Messenger of God and tell him about his own destitute condition and ask him for help. Having made up his mind he went to the Prophet (s). However, before he could express what he had in his mind, he heard the Prophet (S) say: "We will not grudge our assistance to anybody who asks for help. But if one adopts self-reliance and abstains from making appeals of help to ".the creatures, God will fulfil his needs

On hearing these words, he refrained from expressing his intent and returned home. However, his poverty and destitution made him impatient and the next day he set out again to see the Prophet (s) and carry out his resolve. But again he heard the Prophet (S) saying the same thing: "We will not grudge our assistance to anybody who asks for help. But if one adopts self-reliance and abstains from making appeals of help to the ".creatures, God will fulfil his needs

This time also he abstained from expressing his need and returned home. However, as he saw no hopes of any relief coming, for the third time he went again to see the Prophet (S). This time the Prophet (s) again repeated the same words. However, on this occasion he

had a feeling of strength and self-confidence on hearing the words of the Noble Messenger, may God bless him and his Household. He felt as if he had found the key to his problem. As he returned, he walked with steady and resolute steps. He went into deep thought. He told himself that he would no more make appeals of help to creatures of God. Rather he would rely on the eternal power of God and make the utmost use of his own God-given capacities. He prayed to God to assist him in the work that he was about to take up and make him self- reliant. Then he thought for a while about what he could do. He came to the conclusion that he should set out for the desert, gather firewood and sell it. He set out to carry out his decision. He borrowed .an axe and set out towards the desert

Every day he would gather firewood, carry it to the town, and sell it. He had a pleasant feeling of satisfaction that he was making an earning with his own work. Several days passed in this manner and he continued until he made enough money to buy his own implements and an animal to carry the firewood. After pursuing this occupation for .some time he came to possess sufficient wealth and even bought several slaves

One day the Messenger of God, may God bless him and his Household, saw him and said to him with a smile: "Didn't

I tell you that we would not grudge our assistance to anyone who asks us for help. But if someone adopts self-reliance and abstains from appealing to creatures for assistance, God will fulfil his needs?"(۱)

:Samuel Smiles, a well-known scholar, writes

Self-confidence is the basis of every success and progress. Should the majority of people in a nation possess this virtue, it would become a great and powerful nation. The secret of its rise and power lies only in possessing this quality, because it strengthens one's determination which is weakened by dependence on others.

The help that a person receives from outside mostly weaken his power of perseverance and struggle; for in that case there is no reason for him to endeavour and make effort. This is especially true when the outside assistance goes beyond the bounds of necessity. At such times the mind becomes lethargic and the spirit of determination and the capacity for effort die in man.

The best laws and regulations give man the freedom in life to rely upon himself and to manage his own life. But men always think that it is laws which provide felicity and comfort, not their own conduct and effort.

If we look deeply, we will find that the vices that are attributed to a nation are actually the vices of a group of individuals. Should we want to check those vices by the means of laws, they will reappear somewhere else in another form۱ until there is a basic change in the spirit and character

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۱- Al-Kulayni, Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۲, p. ۱۳۹.

(of a nation.(۱

:Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, may Peace be upon him, said'

One who cannot raise himself and ascend to the ultimate height of which he is (capable, will not be lifted by anything else.(۲

One who fails to make effort due to negligence or laziness will find his state (deteriorate and decline.(۳

:A Western thinker writes

Nature suffers nothing to remain in her kingdoms which cannot help itself. The genesis and maturation of a planet, its poise and orbit, the bent tree recovering itself from the strong wind, the vital resources of every animal and vegetable, are ... demonstrations of the self-sufficing and therefore self- relying soul

But now we are a mob. Man does not stand in awe of man, nor is his genius admonished to stay at home, to put itself in communication with the internal ocean, ... but it goes abroad to beg a cup of water of the arms of other men

If our young men miscarry in their first enterprises they lose all heart. If the young merchant fails, men say he is ruined. if the finest genius studies at one of the colleges and is not installed in office within one year afterwards in the cities or suburbs of Boston or New York, it seems to his friends and to himself that he is right in being disheartened and in complaining the rest of his life. A sturdy lad from New Hampshire ,or Vermont, who in turn tries all the professions who teams it, farms it, peddles

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.Samuel Smiles, Persian trans., E'timad beh nats, pp. ۱۴-۱۶ -۱

.Ghurar al-hikam wa durar al-kalim, p. ۶۴۲ -۲

.Ibid., p. G۹۸ -۳

keeps a school, preaches, edits a newspaper, goes to Congress, buys a township, and so forth, in successive years and always like a cat falls on his feet is worth a hundred of these city dolls. He walks abreast with his days and feels no shame in not "steadying a profession," for he does not postpone his life, but lives already. He has not one chance, but a hundred chances. Let a Stoic open the resources of man and tell men they are not leaning willows, but can and must detach themselves; that with the exercise of self-trust, new powers shall appear.(۱)

Although self-assurance is one of the biggest and most beneficial of moral virtues, one should be careful lest this merit is not confused with pride and self-esteem. That is because there is a world of difference between a realistic outlook and self-conceit. One who has a greater confidence in himself than his abilities would warrant, being inordinately impressed by them and having an exaggerated view of his talents, is a victim of pride and conceit. Such a person commits many errors as a result of the illusions of pride, relying as he does on his imagined extraordinary powers. By failing to see the difficulties involved in a task, or by overlooking them or failing to judge their real importance, he fails to equip himself properly in order to confront them. Accordingly, he cannot prove himself at the time of necessity and the test of his ability and expertise.

On the

۱- Emerson, "Self-reliance," cf. Commins Linscott, The Social Philosophers (New York: Modern Pocket Library ۱۹۵۴), p. ۴۰۶-۴۰۹.

contrary, the realistic person is wary of consequences and has a natural and healthy optimism. He makes a careful judgement of his powers and capacities at the outset .and does not trespass their limits

The Pessimists Lack of Self-assurance

In the same way that talents and faculties develop in a person possessing self-confidence, making him progress and lead a free and happy life, so also a pessimistic individual under the influence of negative thoughts weakens his constructive faculties and undermines his capacity for action. Someone who constantly complains about the evil of the times, problems, and daily tensions only invites failure instead of making his own destiny. He becomes a captive of events and the waves of life would constantly .drive him backwards without permitting him to approach his ideals

This negative spirit is a typical and prominent characteristic of persons who are :devoid of the sense of self-assurance. Accordingly to psychologists

At times one finds pessimistic persons who are not confident of themselves due to their lack of self-assurance and the inadequacy they observe within themselves. That is, they are not sure that they would be able to carry out a task that is delegated to them or one they are requested to accomplish Accordingly, they refuse to carry out any demand that is made of them, fearing that if they give a positive response and fail to meet it others will discover their inability and that will bring them a loss of face. Therefore, by saying 'No' they draw a protective wall around themselves, for

.a 'No' simply ends the matter

A negative person generally sees everything from the wrong side and has a negative opinion on every matter that is under discussion. His conduct and attitude towards persons, things, and opinions is negative, and therefore he hardly every derives joy from persons and things. He is always critical, constantly finding faults and .shortcomings. He puts on airs, dislikes old ideas, and is suspicious of the new

Those who have a negative attitude have a hostile view of persons they do not know. Should they encounter people they have not met before in a gathering, they are hardly drawn to them. They are drawn only towards those that are like themselves, and that, too, because they imagine that their friendship will help in the propagation (of their views.(١

Islam and Personal Independence

The quest for personal independence arises from the depth of man's emotional being. This natural desire can be realised only when one's behaviour and approach is based .on this inclination

Islam takes a frank, wholesome, and healthy view of the source of all human tendencies. It not only does not require the repression of man's genuine and constructive inner urges, it does not believe in inhibiting their appearance into the consciousness. Rather, it employs them for the sake of man's edification and his ascent towards sublime human goals. It pays a simultaneous attention to the dynamic .urges as well as the principle that can control and discipline these urges

With such a broad view it is possible to bring about a healthy

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١ - Marguerite Malm Herbert Sorenson, Psychology for Living, Persian trans., .Rawanshenasi baraye zistan, p. ٢٠٠

state in the psyche which is balanced in all respects, so that each of its urges and faculties is properly employed, enabling man to make the ascent towards perfection with steady and firm steps. He can spend the energies accumulated within him in securing the basic goals of life and in attaining the outstanding and sublime station .which is worthy of a genuine human being

The desire for progress is a human aspiration. However, given his limited powers, it is impossible for man to spend all his energies in attaining base goals while still possessing the capacity to make the upward journey towards edification and to .establish a relationship with the higher world

Continual pampering of bases and degenerate motives and constant catering to their demands is the real factor responsible for human degeneration. In such a state it will be most difficult for a person to have the capacity to act in a worthy and self-edifying .manner

In order to overcome all the obstacles that lie in the way, Islam mobilises man's urge to become a positive being, so that he may remain steadfast in the face of shattering events and overcome every problem through an unrelenting struggle against obstacles, and remain firm and steady in confrontation with powerful individuals. This is how one's determination and courage develop and one comes to possess a .wonderful and invaluable spiritual power

Man's independence and dignity lie in facing the struggle of life with courage and fortitude and solving its problems by being self-reliant. This goal

can be realised only when a person can stand on his own feet with all his power for the purpose of securing material and spiritual felicity. 'Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, may Peace be upon him, said:

One who elevates his will and attains to its higher degrees is considered worthy of praise and honour by all nations.(۱)

One who lacks self-assurance and personal independence is after some refuge that may protect him in the hardships of life, like a creeper which with its soft and delicate branches winds its way up a tall oak so as to be secure from the wind and the vicissitudes of weather in the shadow of its strength.

A negative spirit can also turn into a debasing slavery to a powerful individual, and were someone to debase himself to that extent he would completely undermine his own personality and forfeit the power to govern his own affairs. He would be condemned to being always a follower and not a leader or master of his own self and its independence and freedom. And so long as such a frame of mind overshadows his being, it would be impossible for him to acquire human dignity.

Imam 'Ali, may Peace be upon him, said:

You will feel debased in relation to someone on whom you become dependent.(۲)

Individual Responsibility

In the system of Islamic teaching the realisation of eternal and spiritual felicity also depends on one's personal conduct. Basically, personal responsibility constitutes the foundation of Islamic teaching. That is, man is expected to carry

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۱- Ghurar al-hikam wa durar al-kalim, p. ۶۶۱.

۲- Ibid. p. ۶۶۸.

out all the duties that have been assigned to him in the spheres of religion and worldly existence through the various stages of life by reliance on his effort and action. The concept of retribution and recompense, which is one of the self-evident notions of Islam, is also founded on this basis. The Noble Qur'an teaches that man will not get any reward except for his effort and endeavour.

(Every soul is a hostage of its own deeds. (۷۵:۳۷

We will give a pure and wholesome life to everyone, man or woman, who acts righteously and has faith, and We will rewards them in accordance with the best of what they used to do. (۱۶:۹۷)

Aside from the reward and punishment of the Hereafter, man would see the outcome of his conduct in this world itself. The Prophet of Islam said:

(Whoever commits an evil deed will receive its retribution in this world Itself.(۱)

Whoever sows good will reap a good reward, and whoever sows evil will not gather any fruit except regret.(۲)

Emerson, an American philosopher, writes:

The world looks like a multiplication table, or a mathematical equation, which, turn it how you will, balances itself. Take what figure you will, its exact value, nor more nor less, still returns to you. Every secret is told, every crime is punished, every virtue rewarded, every wrong redressed, in silence and certainty. What we call retribution is the universal necessity by which the whole appears wherever a part appears. If you see smoke, there must be fire. If

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۱- Nahj al-fasahah, p. ۵۹۲.

۲- Ibid. p. ۶۲۲.

.you see a hand or a limb, you know that the trunk to which it belongs is there behind

Every act rewards itself, or in other words integrates itself, in a twofold manner; first in the thing, or in real nature; and secondly in the circumstance, or in apparent nature. Men call the circumstance the retribution. The casual retribution is in the thing and is seen by the soul. The retribution in the circumstance is seen by the understanding; it is inseparable from the thing, but is often spread over a long time and so does not become distinct until after many years. The specific stripes may follow late after the offence, but they follow because they accompany it. Crime and punishment grow out of one stem. Punishment is a fruit that unsuspected ripens within the flower of the (pleasure which concealed it.(١

The Criterion of Moral Worth of Actions

Besides, Islam takes an original view of the real inner motives of human actions and makes intent the criterion for value judgements. Every action has two aspects, and each of these two aspects has to be treated separately from the viewpoint of good and evil. An action may be greatly valuable from one aspect and worthless from another. What is significant is the kind of inner moral motive that has prompted the doer to perform that act and the kind of goal that was envisaged in his mental .perspective

If in such cases our judgement relies on specific social and objective values the .intents of the doer are not relevant

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Emerson, "Compensation," ef. Commins Linscott, The Social Philosophers (New - ١ .York: Modern Poeket Library ١٩٥۴), pp. ۴۴٢-۴۴٣

It does not matter whether a person's humanitarian act is performed with an ostentatious motive and for the pursuit of material interests, or if he is driven by a sublime motive and his act is inspired by a sacred intent. Hence from a social point of view a virtuous person is one which is beneficial to society. The individual's moral or .spiritual maturity is not relevant, nor the motive that drives him to perform his action

However, in a divine perspective the quantitative dimensions of actions are not important. That which makes an act worthy of acceptance by God is the quality of an action and the inner spiritual condition of the doer's person. Here, that which is significant is the kind of relation that exists between the doer and the act, as well as the aim and intent that have led him to perform it. If he performs a virtuous act to show off and to impress others, such an action not only does not elevate him towards the higher planes of being but also brings him down. In order to be considered .righteous, it is not just sufficient that an act should be beneficial for society

A socially beneficial action is useful from the viewpoint of spiritual growth when it takes a spiritual and angelic form and the soul transcends the confines of self-seeking .motives and self-aggrandisement, to reach the frontiers of inner purity and sincerity

:The Qur'an declares

(And they were not commanded except to worship God with sincere devotion. (۹۸:۴

The

:Noble Messenger, may God bless him and his Family, said

(The value of works depends on intentions.(۱

This is a definite and unchanging basis on the basis of which the worth and acceptability of deeds and actions can be determined. The basis factor that results in one's edification and the acceptability and sublimity of one's works is the honourable .and sacred purpose that takes the Lord's pleasure into account

The best sign of a steady faith in God is the moral and spiritual character of a person's intentions and motives. In that case his acts assume a special value and merit, and he comes to partake of Cod's support and His infinite grace. This firm and valuable-criterion does not lie beyond the domain of human conduct, capacity, cognition, and .feeling

One whose soul has not been lit with the rays of God's greatness and whose heart is devoid of sincerity and faith, the motives that drive him are those which derive from self-seeking desires and the love for a passing reputation. The tasks that such a person begins and brings to conclusion, being devoid of spirituality and truth, are performed, for instance, so that others may respect him and consider him a man of human merit. Such a worthless objective will have a degenerating effect on his character and fail him as a human being. The specious achievements of such a person will not possess any worth before Cod, and he will not receive any reward for his accomplishments except achieving the limited and

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.Nahj al-fasahah, p. ۱۹۰ -۱

.insignificant purpose that he had in view

The persons who are self-confident and reliant on their actions do not feel any need for ostentation and show. Ostentation is the conduct of those who lack action and .confidence, and suffer from a spiritual malady

Imam 'Ali the Commander of the Faithful, may Peace be upon him, makes this remark :about such a person

The speech of an ostentatious person is pleasing, but there is a far-reaching disease (in his heart.(١

(Self-conceit derives from the pettiness of one's values.(٢

:Schachter, the well-known psychologist, says

Another means that we employ in order to attract others' attention, despite personal failure and lack of success, is bragging and self- advertisement. We imagine that we have already achieved what we aspired to achieve and done what we wanted to do, and we attribute them to ourselves. Instead of the success that we could not achieve and the important tasks that we could not accomplish, we content ourselves with talking continually about what we have done and to magnify their own deeds no .matter how much insignificant they might have been

Such persons are so mislead by their own bragging and self- complaisance that they lose every opportunity to make any kind of achievement. If their self-advertisement provides them with a passing relief from the painful lack of success and inattention of .others, and temporarily deceives their listeners, it does not solve the real problem

One who can carry out his job correctly and successfully and win the hearts of others by his worthy conduct

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-Ghurar al-hikam wa durar al-kalim, p. ۶١٠ -١

.Ibid ., p. ١٠۶ -٢

and speech, has no need to brag. By devoting himself to action instead of vainglory, (every day he makes more friends and achieves greater success.(١

:Schopenhauer says

Vainglory produces contempt and resentment, because it is on the one hand the sign of dishonesty and dissemblance, and, on the other, a product of stupidity and ignorance. One who continuously claims to possess a merit, is certain to be devoid of it. Those who ceaselessly talk of their achievements, the brilliance of their minds, their ingenuity and power, should know for sure that they lack all these merits. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that deception and vainglory cannot endure, and the truth will (be ultimately revealed resulting in a total loss of face and repute.(٢

Making Oneself the Measure of Things

A vicious and base person interprets the conduct and character of others in .accordance with his own filthy motives

:Ali, may Peace be upon him, said'

An evil person does not have a good opinion of anyone, because he does not see (anyone except through the medium of his own character.(٣

This subjective tendency to view others through the lenses of one's own motives is a :scientifically established fact, and this is what psychologists have to say in this regard

When our feelings, thoughts, and inclinations inordinately colour the world, it is certain that we would view everything in it from our subjective viewpoint, as if our feelings have cast their shadow on the universe. Storms arouse within us feelings of despair and forlornness, and a soft breeze makes us feel comfortable

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.Rushd-e shakhsiyyat, p. ٩٢ -١

.Afkar-e Schopenhauer, Persian trans., by Mushfiq Hamadani, ١٣٢۶ H. Sh. p. ٩٢ -٢

.Ghurar al-hikam wa durar al-kalim, p. ۱۰۴ -۳

and satisfied. In this way we view nature only through the window of our feelings. Our feelings may lead us to regard the cat as a fine and loveable animal or as one that is troublesome and detestable. Emotions and feelings totally transform the world that .we live in, or they create a new world for us

A man once produced a sound with a sonometer and asked those who were present as to what sound they had heard. Every one of them had a particular answer. One said that he had heard the sound of a whistle, another that of a trumpet, a third had heard a human voice, and each of them said something different. Certainly, the sound that each person in the audience had heard related to his personal experience. Obviously, a single tune could not have all these different effects. Hence that which varied the effect of the tune on persons was their own experience. In the famous story of Edgar Allen Poe, the angry cries that come out of the throat of the murderous .child were interpreted variously by the German, French, Italian and Russian listeners

Prosecutors and lawyers know that it is a rare thing for witnesses who have seen a quite simple event from a very close distance to report in an identical manner. Even in matters which do not arouse emotions in us we observe clearly the extent to which our opinions and beliefs differ. In cases where emotions are involved our mental deductions

(are many times more suspect.(١

The Marvellous Effects of Trust in God

Self-reliance is not only not contrary to trust in God, the reliance one places in the Lord of the universe and the faith one has in the eternal Divine power strengthen and .develop one's personality

The human being having faith, while possessing the assets of self- reliance and an independent personality, utilises all the available opportunities and means fully and carefully. He does not waste any opportunity, but, at the same time, he does not confine his spirit within the walls of material causes and factors. His humanity is not .limited by them

Rather, his horizons are always open, to ascend to newer heights, and the scope of his activity is wide and extensive. That is because a part of his spiritual vigour and .activity are devoted to higher purposes of life

The human being with a heart full of faith relies upon God, Who directs all affairs with .His infinite power and has no partner or collaborator in any of His works

Whatsoever mercy God opens to men, none can withhold, and whatsoever He (withholds, none can release after His withholding it, and He is Almighty, All-wise. (٣٥:٢

Where can man find a refuge that is beyond the realm of God's power? Taking refuge in something other than God will have no result except disappointment and humiliation. How can any creature be master and arbiter of others' affairs, while it itself stands in need of God for everything, and owns nothing that pertains to itself, and has no power that

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Strecker, Wilkerforce Appel, Rawanshenasi bardye hameh, Persian trans. by - ١ .Mushfiq Hamadsini, p. ٢٥٩

?is its own, nor is capable of offering refuge to anyone

Accordingly, there is nothing more appropriate for the human being than seeking to live under the shadow of support and grace of God, who regulates all matters with His might and wisdom. Humility before God, at all times, in hardship and ease, and the conviction that the infinite power of God is above all ordinary powers, causes, and factors, that it rules and governs everything, give a wonderful strength to the spirit. It creates such a confidence and peacefulness within man's heart and soul that one would not be swept away by events and lose one's human equilibrium and worth, or .be oppressed by anything big or small

When one surrenders one's soul and mind to God, to the degree that one is capable of, one becomes infused with a spirit of submission to God and resignation towards His decrees. Then he neither complains of unpleasant events nor is carried away or made proud by his success. He is not affected by things that bewilder others and leave an undesirable effect on them. Due to their steady determination and spirit filled with confidence they would not submit to despair and desperation, which are so often .the source of defeat and failure

Reliance upon God never leads to any kind of weakness or indifference. Rather, it gives a self-confidence that strengthens the will and removes all traces of doubt and .vacillation from the heart

The unrelenting struggles of men of God in the face

of unfavourable circumstances and against the destructive elements and degenerate ideas in their communities, derived their strength from the infinite Truth. They sought the help of this invisible agent for pursuing their plans of reform and guidance of the people. That is because their souls had an unbreakable bond with the indestructible .power of God and then pursued their goals resolutely to the very end

A self-reliance that is devoid of reliance on God cannot deliver the human spirit from agitation and anguish under hard and debilitating circumstances. Hardships and unfavourable factors of life shatter the spirit of those who lack trust in God and whose vision does not go beyond matter and corporeal reality. A feeling of gloom builds up within them and in such an oppressive state they cannot make the ascent towards perfection and edification and perceive truths which are greatly sublime and luminous. A crushing feeling of anguish settles upon them at encounter with unwanted events of the smallest significance, or they are shattered by catastrophic .hardships of life

This point becomes clear when we observe the spirit and conditions of Muslims during the early era of Islam, for they were the best symbol and example of trust in and reliance upon God. One does not observe any impotence, lethargy, or a negative indifference in those who make sacrifices for the advancement of their faith and work for their goals. Relentless effort, under the most difficult and taxing conditions, for building a new, prosperous society was their patent

method. Those who have been brought up in this dynamic school of thought never succumb to loss of confidence. It was this steadiness of resolve and a composed and confident spirit that paved the path of their progress and led to the emergence of .such a unique and matchless society in world's history

Everyone should evaluate his situation in life and identify the road he has chosen through the terrain of existence. He should find out whether he is going towards felicity and goodness or towards wretchedness and deprivation. By identifying one's spiritual needs, one can effectively resist the conditions and factors that disturb one's spiritual equilibrium, not allowing harmful elements to accumulate and consolidate their strength. However, when it becomes evident that someone's being has been overshadowed by some inadequacy or defect, it is not possible to devise a basic remedy until the source of that inadequacy has been traced within the depths of the .victim's soul

Those who are victims of lack of confidence are afraid of starting on any venture due to their fear of failure. The best remedy is to find the causes of this spiritual defect, for identification of causes of any disease is essential for its treatment. In this way one can explore the depths of one's being and discover the key to one's cure. Without doubt, the effort that is made to overcome one's inadequacies yields remarkable results, for man has the capacity to wage a consistent struggle against unhealthy .spiritual factors

Every bad habit is

the sign of a weakness that comes about as the result of repetitive behaviour and takes the form of a harmful and chronic disease. Though at first it seems difficult to change a habit, but it is possible to alter one's habits through exercise and effort. Every harmful habit that is overcome is to be counted as a great victory on the path of attaining to human merit and sublime spiritual qualities. Imam Ali, may Peace be upon :him, said

(It is by overcoming bad habits that man can rise to the higher stations.(۱)

Chapter ۱۴: Fear

point

Fear is one of the basic instincts of every living creature when confronted with some kind of danger. Whenever in its struggle for life the human being is confronted with the alternatives of either avoiding danger or-facing harm or destruction, the feeling of fear gives it the power necessary to secure survival. Hence the purpose of fear is to mobilise one's energy and effort to find the way of deliverance from danger and peril. Had the human beings of prehistoric times failed to avoid the various dangers that .threatened them, the human species would not have survived

This principle is valid not only in the case of dangers to physical life but also holds in respect of any threat to man's personality that gives rise to the feeling of fear. Common experience has shown that the danger of becoming subject to the domination of others is a greater cause of fear amongst individuals than anything else. Such

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۱- Ghurar al-hikam wa durar al-kalim

a fear can paralyse one's active life for months, or even years, and bring active life to .a standstill

In fact, this anxiety arises from a threat to personality and the danger of its toss. Someone who is faced with such a threat feels as if he has no power to take any decision. He is compelled to seek others' help and decide his affairs through their .assistance

The stronger one's fear of tossing one's personality, the more intense is the anxiety that torments him. At times this condition may reach the point of madness. That which is said concerning inherent instincts, that they are beneficial for survival and for the preservation of life, is true only when they do not exceed the limits of moderation. But .when they become extreme they can become harmful

Imaginary fears born of ungrounded imaginings and expectations of misfortune and grief are signs of a kind of painful pathological condition which weakens the power of thought. As revealed by the researches done by specialists in the field, this factor not .only leads many people to toss their well-being but also results in considerable harm

It has often been observed that the state of crisis resulting from panic and anxiety becomes the cause of untimely death, for an unexpected bout of panic can upset the .mechanism of one's life and bring life to a sudden halt

Sometimes, the state of fear and anxiety is a prelude to severe psychic illness caused ;by some radical changes in a person's psyche

for sound and healthy persons do not ordinarily become subject to such states. On the contrary, they try with all their mental capacity to maintain and reinforce their mental .equilibrium

Some people are victims of vague and unknown fears. They cannot identify what troubles them, nor are those closest to them aware of the cause of their hidden anguish and pain. Age, of course, is of direct relevance in relation to feelings of fear and anxiety. These feelings are characteristic of childhood years, and all people, more or less, experience states of agitation and panic during their childhood years and well .until the age of mental maturity

In any case, this affliction destroys the urge for progress and immobilises all elements of success, diminishing the level of one's mental and physical activity. Its harmful .effects become visible throughout one's activities and conduct

Aside from the fact that such fears are of no benefit, and regardless of whether the expected dangers materialise or not, the fear that one feels at the present has no result except causing waste of time and diminished physical and mental vigour. Moreover, when the feared misfortune or calamity actually does occur, one will lack .the power and courage to face it

:Fear and anxiety reveal themselves in various forms. Dr. Cowlest says

Do you lack self-confidence and consider yourself incapable of facing the conditions of life? Do you suffer from a painful feeling of shyness and timidity? Do you find it difficult in social gatherings to face someone whom you

have not met earlier and does that make you uncomfortable and anxious? Don't you feel really comfortable and at ease when you are atone? I your answer to the above questions is Yes, then you are afraid. Do you feel that people consider you to be senseless? That they do not understand you? That everyone is against you? Do you think and brood a time concerning your past and what you have lost? Do you feel that you have committed a sin in the past in relation to a certain person, regardless of ?whether such a sin has been committed or not

Do you continually think about yourself and are continually in a state of anxiety about what will happen to you? Are you quickly affected by people's idle talk and frivolous remarks? When you get angry and inflamed, are you afraid that you would not be ?able to control yourself

Do you, in general, loath to associate with people and have strong prejudices? Do you find it difficult to develop terms of attachment and intimacy with others? All of these (are different forms of fear.(۱

When one resolves to act in accordance with certain principles that one adopts in life and in a decisive manner, one will bear problems and misfortunes with courage and fortitude. Such a person puts up a manly resistance against hardships, and despair .and despondency cannot subdue his spirit

Many talented people who could attain a distinguished position in life by relying on this inner power and who possess

p: ۴۰۰

Cowlest, Edward Spencer, Conquest of Fear and Fatigue, p. ۵۱۰ -۱

adequate strength to expel fear from their minds, cannot make an initial movement on his path due to the lack of sufficient courage. As a result, they fail to climb the .ladder of progress and their capacities languish forever

That which results in one losing control over one's life and affairs is indecisiveness. Wasting time worrying about events that may never happen will lead to irreparable harm. Shakespeare says: "Those who are afraid of the sting of the honey-bee do not ".deserve to possess the hive's honey

It is possible for everyone at all times to get rid of unfounded fears and baseless anxieties and to replace them with optimistic ideas. No matter how strong one's will power may be, and however sublime one's goals should be, one cannot get rid of some habits instantaneously. Such habits must be eradicated gradually. It is not sufficient that one should be merely aware of being a victim to groundless notions; rather, one must make a consistent mental effort to guard one's personality against illusory fears. One should stop ruminating over distressing thoughts by opening one's mind to positive thoughts which are in complete contrast to them. In this- way one .can prepare the ground for considerable progress

A lamp is not lighted until it is turned on, and once lighted it will not go off until it is switched off. Similarly, when the darkness of anxiety overwhelms one's spirit, one should turn on the lamp of His intellect and take a deep took at the

realities of life and its bright side so that one's mind is relieved from the stress of .baseless fears

Someone who is unusually prone to illusory fears even in trivial matters should first examine these thoughts which upset his mental composure so as to discover that fear and anxiety are incapable of producing any positive results and that every difficulty requires thoughtful attention, then he should plant the seedlings of hope and confidence in the garden of his soul instead of cultivating the weeds of baseless .anxieties and devote himself to their cultivation and care like an skilled gardener

Without doubt, fear and anxiety are products of mans imagination and have no place outside the mind. When one realises this fact, one would be able to dominate fear to a .considerable extent and obtain peace of mind is which is the most valuable of things

Neither Timidity Nor Rashness

From the viewpoint of the science of ethics, virtue lies midway between the two extremes of excess and neglect. Courage is a virtue that lies midway between rashness and timidity. One who is free from recklessness and fear possesses the virtue of courage. It is a veritable truth that human advancement in various fields, and even vital discoveries and explorations of unknown continents, owe their existence to the courage of brave persons. It was their courage which was responsible for certain .crucial developments in science

On the whole, spiritual strength makes up the real factor behind human advancement and progress. The stronger one's spirit is in the struggle of

.life, the more brilliant will be one's achievements

Intellectual and social revolutions cannot succeed without the element of courage. The role of this moral virtue in the course of human advancement in the material and intellectual spheres, as well as the results of practical experience, have convinced even the biggest sceptics of the truth of this matter. The strength and power exhibited by the character and conduct of positive personalities also effectively .proves it

The great men of history, who have played the most effective role in the deliverance of their nations and their release from distressing conditions, have generally been men of great valour and courage. In fact, the development of this quality will lead to .the growth of other capacities as well

Hence it is the duty of every individual to himself to pay more attention to the attainment of this great moral virtue which is one of the most beneficial of human qualities. The problems that should be solved, the tasks that must be carried out, and the results that should be obtained from them, may vary from one individual to another; but in practice their foundations rest upon personal courage. For often many fruitful and formative ideas and innovative thoughts that come to the minds of some persons never cross the frontiers of their private thoughts due to fear and apprehension. They do possess the capacity and talent to attain personal excellence, but they lack the spirit of courage. Although in many cases they have faith in the validity

of their opinions and their creative ideas, but, unfortunately, they do not possess the courage and confidence to express their fruitful opinions.

Whenever they are called upon to present their plans and proposals, they immediately become alarmed and upset, like someone who distrusts himself. Even in scientific and social debates, when faced with contrary opinions they retreat without making the least defence of their opinions. They withdraw their arguments, though their views are more logical and better reasoned than those of others and based on firmer and more valid foundations.

The causes and factors that lead to such a condition in persons should be explored and investigated, and unless these factors are not identified they will not achieve mental peace and personal courage. Possibly, such a person might have been full of hope and courage in his childhood years, but some unfortunate incidents might have arrested the growth of those capacities, or his fruitful and superior thoughts might have been repressed by his guardians and teachers due to neglect and ignorance.

When it becomes established that one's creative and constructive faculties have been weakened, one can take remedial steps for strengthening them by resorting to certain fundamental means. If he can expel the baseless fears that dominate his being, he will gradually regain self-confidence. It is under the influence of the formative power of courage that doubts and misgivings will give way to inner composure and security.

Ignorance of the Character of Life

One of the basic factors that lead to anxiety and its growth to a dangerous point is

ignorance of the characteristics of life. A person possessing courage knows well that life involves various kinds of hardships and setbacks. Whenever he encounters some difficulty, he maintains his composure, and this prepares him to face future adversities. For when one anticipates unpleasant events in the future, one will be .somewhat prepared to face them

And when the event actually takes place it will not affect him in an adverse manner. On the contrary, if someone does not possess the readiness to face life's tragedies, as soon as one of them occurs it will be a fearsome and shattering blow for him. Neglect and the lack of attention to the realities of life magnify the effect of tragic events and make them appear disproportionately deadly and frightful. Moreover, the readiness to face future tragedies prepares one mentally for the stage of recovery and .smoothens the path of encountering them

:Voltaire says

Throughout life man must advance like a warrior and die with his sword in his hand. Only weak and feeble-minded persons are knocked down by events. Only weak people constantly complain of the world's woes and hardships. As long as there is uncertainty about the dangers involved in an event and so long as there is any hope of averting it, don't give way to weakness. Remain steadfast with all the determination (at your command.(١

In general, awareness and consciousness are the most basic means for the reduction of anxiety and fear. With the advancement of human knowledge and the growth of

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Akfar e Schopenhaur, p. ٩٧ -١

man's intellect there is a decrease in the stresses caused by fears. That is why many factors that created fear in primitive and semi-primitive men during the various eras of man's history have no significance today for people due to advancement of .knowledge and intellectual growth

Experience has shown definitively that knowledge by itself results in confidence and tranquillity, which takes the place of distressing anxieties. It is on this basis that all psychiatrists consider consciousness of that was previously subconscious and awareness of the causes of painful fears as part of the treatment for mental anxiety .and depressing thoughts

We should not forget the point that although the ancient fears have been dispelled to a considerable extent by the progress of science, the changes in modern life have substituted new anxieties for the fears of the past. In industrialised societies, which have created large cities with huge conglomerations of people who remain strangers to one another, human beings have become lonelier despite the heavy concentrations of population. The intimacy, friendship and attachment that marked interpersonal relations in the past have given way to feelings of estrangement and isolation. The concentration of population has lead to alienation and loneliness. Although people live close to one another, they are not friendly and familiar with the moral, personal and spiritual characteristics of one another. In times of need, they are extremely .parsimonious in offering one another help or consolation

Indifference, injustice, different forms of vices, and neglect of duty and moral criteria lead to the

emergence of fear. In fact, fear is a kind of punishment that man receives due to .deviation from the course of moral growth

:An American thinker says

All infractions of love and equity in our social relations are speedily punished. They are punished by fear. Whilst I stand in simple relations to my fellowman, I have no displeasure in meeting him. We meet as water meets water, or as two currents of air mix, with perfect diffusion and interpenetration of nature. But as soon as there is any departure from simplicity and attempt to partiality, or good for me that is not good for him, my neighbour feels the wrong; he shrinks from me as far as I have shrunk from him; his eyes no longer seek mine; there is war between us; there is hate in him and .fear in me

All the old abuses in society, universal and particular, all unjust accumulations of property and power, are avenged in the same manner. Fear is an instructor of great sagacity and the herald of all revolutions. One thing he teaches, that there is rottenness where he appears. He is a carrion crow, and though you see not well what he hovers for, there is death somewhere. Our property is timid, our laws are timid, our cultivated classes are timid. Fear for ages has boded and mowed and gibbered over government and property. That obscene bird is not there for nothing. He indicates (great wrongs which must be revised.(۱

The Combination Of Hope and Fear in Human Nature

In human nature hope and

Emerson, Ralph Waldo, "Compensation", in Man and Man: The Social Philosophers., -۱ pp. ۴۴۷-۸

fear have been put together. These two are born with man in his infancy and grow with him. The fear of pain, suffering, poverty, and disability is a feeling that arises from within. On the other hand, there is the hope of security, comfort, prosperity, and strength. Every wish and hope that is fulfilled is immediately replaced by another. Fear and hope define and delimit our thoughts, conduct, and goals, and the very direction of our lives. Man chooses his path through life in accordance with their character and extent. The person whose thoughts are occupied with expectations of wealth, position, and power, defines his goals on their basis and directs his activities toward these goals. That which preoccupies his mind and concerns is the choice of such means and methods as will materialise his hopes and desires in the shortest .time

However, one who has liberated himself from the bondage of such desires does not devote his efforts to this kind of goals in an unlimited and unconditional manner, for .he is master of himself and is free from the chains of such obsessions

By relying on the principle of fear and hope, Islam relieves the human being from every kind of fear which oppresses the soul and which has no bearing on real life. Because a fear that does not help change the unpleasant realities of life is futile. In this way, it liberates the human soul from fears relating to mundane matters and the transitory gains of life, calling

it to effort and endeavour in all fields of life. In the same way, it expels every deviant hope from the human soul and thus preserves it from deviance, so that man may orient himself towards a worthy and vigorous life and abstain from putting his reliance .in anything except the eternal power of God

Islam believes that none of the ordinary factors, however imposing, has essentially the power to cause benefit or harm. Hence they are not fit to be feared. That which should be feared is that Power that embraces every being in Its omnipotence, sovereignty and dispensation. It is that which grants and deprives, gives and takes :away. The Glorious Qur'an refers to this truth in these words

O honoured Messenger) say: "Who provides you out of heaven and earth or who) rules over hearing and sight and who brings forth the living from the dead and brings forth the dead from the living and who directs the affair?" They will surely say "God" (Then say: "Will you not then be God-fearing? (۱۰:۳۱

Moreover, since man's hopes are often related to various bounties of life and comforts and joys of a corporeal kind, Islam does not deprive anyone of wholesome joys and pleasures of this kind and does not ask people to turn their back on worldly matters. However, it redirects hopes from false and illusory values to real and true values and worthy aspirations. It warns man that he should not be deceived by transitory joys and get immersed

in carnal desires and lusts, thus failing to realise everlasting and true joys. At all times :it impels him to seek the pleasure of the sacred and glorious Essence of God

(Indeed, it is the abode of the Hereafter that is (true) life, did they but know! (۲۹:۶۴

The emphasis placed on God-fearing in Islamic teachings in fact refers to the trepidation that one ought to feel concerning one's own conduct. This kind of fear is not only not harmful but is of great benefit, as it embraces the entire ambit of human conduct. The fear of the undesirable consequences of misconduct sharpens one's sense of caution and vigilance. It brings harmful urges under control and transforms .man into a self-disciplined and orderly being

Solely placing hope in God and His infinite compassion without any fear and trepidation concerning the consequences of one's conduct leads to unbridled and .unprincipled behaviour and gives rise to many vices

A person who is not wary of his own conduct and who pins all hopes in God's forgiveness and mercy can perpetrate any kind of inappropriate actions without feeling any kind of trepidation and still remaining hopeful. Possibly, his entire conduct .and character may sink in sinfulness while his hopes remain nigh

Accordingly, this absence of fear vis-à-vis God will lead to the degeneration of human conduct. That is why in religious teachings it has been emphasised that man's ideal condition is one wherein he wavers between fear and hope: while placing hope in God's infinite mercy, he

should be afraid of the consequences of his own conduct, refraining from falling victim .to pride and conceit

:Imam Sadiq, may Peace be upon him, said

Fear keeps a watch over the human heart and hope is the soul's intercessor and that of its aspirations. Those who know God, fear Him, while they place their hopes in His grace. This fear and hope are like two wings of faith. By their means, those who study the order of being and creation fly towards God's good pleasure, and they witness God's promises and warnings with the eyes of their intellects. By inspiring awe in respect of His warnings, the fear of God turns them towards God's justice, and the hope in Him calls them toward His beneficence and favour. This is how hope revives (the heart and fear suppresses satanic inclinations.(١

These who are equipped with the weapons of knowledge and faith are fearful of God's just retribution. In observing the Divine precepts, their motive is to be complaint towards God and His commands and prohibitions. A fear that arises from foresight serves as a warning that leads one to take precautionary measures. It impels him on the path of duty and draws him to observe his multifarious responsibilities. It restrains him from becoming polluted with the filth of sin and causes man to always keep his .true felicity in view under all circumstances

From the viewpoint of the Qur'an it is knowledge that produces awareness of real :dangers that arise from unprincipled conduct

Only those

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al Fayd al Kashani, Muhajjat al bayda, vol. ۷ p. ۲۸۳ -۱

(of His servants who possess knowledge fear God. (۳۵:۲۸

There is no doubt that the knowledge which raises a person to the rank of men of knowledge and is the means of self-discipline and inner purity is one which contributes to the development of the soul and guides its possessor to the infinite power of God and draws him to His worship. This knowledge preserves the human consciousness and intellect from being polluted with sin, and it is itself the most significant means for awakening the mind to the contemplation of the order of being :and the remembrance of God

Surely in the creation of the heavens and earth and in the alternation of night and day] there are signs for men possessed of minds] who remember God, standing and sitting and on their sides and reflect upon the creation of the heavens and the earth: 'O Lord! Thou hast not created this in vain. Glory be to Thee. Guard us against the (chastisement of the fire. (۳:۱۹۰-۱۹۱

According to the Qur'an, guidance and insight are also products of the state of awe and fear vis-à-vis the Creator

(And he who fears shall be heedful ... (۸۷:۱۰

A man questioned the Noble Messenger, may Peace and God's benedictions be upon him and his Household, concerning the following verse of the Qur'an

Surely those who tremble in fear of their Lord, and those who believe in the signs of] their Lord, and those who associate naught with their Lord] and those who give what they have been

given their hearts quacking that they are returning to their Lord, [those vie in good (works, outreaching to them]. (۲۳:۶۰-۱

He asked the Prophet (S) if the verse also applies to someone who commits theft and adultery and drinks wine and yet fears God The Prophet (S) told him "It means a person who performs prayer and fasting and gives a helping hand to others, while " fearing lest God should not accept any of his works

A harmful and blameworthy kind of fears is one which arises from weakness and abasement. Such fears not only do not motivate anyone to perform edifying deeds, but also hinder progress and become obstacles in the way of human felicity. That is why in the course of their educative programs the leaders of the Islamic faith have sought to liberate their followers from the bondage of unrealistic fears which weaken man's will power and destroy his self-confidence, through reliance on the great power .of the intellect and conscience

When 'Ali, may Peace be upon him, was prepared to march towards the scene of battle after having mobilised his army for war with the Khawarij, one of his companions who had some knowledge of astrology told him that it was not a propitious hour for setting out for battle and that it would lead to his defeat. 'Ali, may Peace be upon him, gave him the following reply dispelling his wrong ideas. He told him

Do you think that you can determine the hour during which evil would

befall people if they go forth? Do you claim to warn them of the hour they would suffer harm if they go forth during it? Whoever confirms what you say rejects the Qur'an, considering that by believing you he does away with the need to seek God's help for attaining what he desires and avoids what he shuns. You want someone who obeys your prescriptions to praise you rather than His Lord, for as you claim, it is you !who guide him concerning the hour in which he can secure benefits and avoid harms

Then turning to the warriors of Islam, 'Ali, may Peace be upon him, declared "Set out (in God's Name!"(۱)

In this way, the Prince of the Faithful ordered the soldiers to march towards the battlefield by putting their reliance in the might of the Lord and without paying attention to the nonsense of the astrologer and heeding his prophecies Finally, the battle ended with the enemy's defeat and victory of 'Ali's army

In another of his sayings 'Ali, may Peace be upon him, instructs his followers in these words

Whenever you are apprehensive of the difficulty of some task, be steadfast and forbearing until it becomes easy for you. With all the hardship it may involve, make it appear simple and easy to those around you. As a result similar task will become (inevitably easy for you to carry out.(۲)

:Psychologists say in this regard

We come across many people in daily life who are demoralised by fear, which they allow to

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Nahj al Balaghah, Khutab ۷۹ -۱
al Amidi, Ghurar al Hikam, p. ۳۱۹ -۲

.dominate them

Many people refrain from participating in social activities due to fear Overwhelmed by .fear, they surrender to it and evade their social responsibilities

Many students do not question their teachers due to fear, or they are so much overwhelmed by fear at the time of tests that they become incapable of responding properly Many people do not admit their mistakes because of fear, and there are some who do not have the courage say 'No,' because they are afraid that something .will happen to them if they do not comply

The consequence of this kind of behaviour is that fear is allowed to dominate the person. Gradually it diminishes his capacity to overcome his fear and increases his .daily problems

Someone who wants to have an exciting life in adult years should develop courage within himself. Everyone needs one or another kind of courage in life, and what could be better than acquiring it in childhood? If we develop personal courage t the proper .time in life, we will have greater strength when it is needed

There is a good way of developing courage and that is to carry out what is essential for mastering one's fear. Everyone has faced situations in life when he could carry out some task but refrained from performing it due to some fear (conscious or subconscious). For instance, you had an opportunity to participate in class discussions but did not because you were afraid. Or a friend of yours made to you a proposal which was against

the principles you believed in, but you did not say 'No' to him so as not to disappoint him. Or you made a mistake which you did not admit due to fear. All these are forms of .fear

Now if you evaluate a situation and do what you must, you have been able to create courage within yourself, and this is the way to develop courage. Every time that you do this, you will be adding to your courage, and gradually you will be able to overcome (your fear. By developing courage you will be quite able to solve your problems.(۱

Today, despite all the advancements made by man in his struggle against the forces of nature, people remain constantly obsessed in their lives by anxieties concerning the future, by fears of failure, sickness, defeat and so on. Baseless anxieties and fears of accidents and other hardships of life paralyse many creative and vigorous minds .and consign many original and invaluable ideas to oblivion

The Noble Messenger, may Peace and God's benedictions be upon him and his Household, says

The worst characteristics that may afflict a person are excessive stinginess and (inordinate fear and cowardice.(۲

Weakness of Will

A weak will is the product of irrational fears. Doubt and vacillation may be the first signs of a deep-seated fear. Wherever there is doubt and hesitation, faith is absent, for one who lacks a perfect faith is constantly troubled by doubt and uncertainty. Vacillation and indecisiveness become his habitual traits. A person possessing faith does not fall victim to

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Marguerite Malm Malm Herbet Sorenson, Psychology for Living, p. ۲۹۹ -۱

Nahj al fasaha. p. ۳۸۲ -۲

doubt and vacillation in his activities and goals, and there is no room in his mind and .consciousness for vexing anxieties

A human being whose spirit is full of faith and sincere intentions and who has established an unbreakable bond with God's infinite power is more powerful than any degenerate power in the whole world. Even if he should suffer a setback and defeat in his confrontation with the material power of evil, he will not consider himself insecure and abandoned; for with all his being he relies on the great power of God and is led by .His guidance, which is true guidance

Overcoming corruption and guiding the lost ones to the right path are fundamental elements deeply rooted in the Islamic faith, traits which become the part of the spiritual make up of the persons. By relying upon the everlasting power of God, they .can subjugate to their will material powers, which are not the sole reality of the world

In a letter that he wrote to the people of Egypt, Imam 'Ali, the Commander of Faithful, may Peace be upon him, commends spiritual strength and courage of his newly :appointed governor, who was a man of perfect faith, in these words

O people or Egypt! I have appointed for you as governor a man from among the servants of God who allows himself no sleep in times of danger, nor has the smallest .fear of the enemy in times of panic. He is severe against the wicked like a blazing fire

He is Malik ibn Harith, of the clan of Banu Mudhij ... He is a sword from among the swords of God: its edge never loses its sharpness, nor its blows ever go amiss.(١)

In the Battle of Siffin, the forces of Mu'awiyah took over the control of the river-bank and intercepted the supply of water to 'Ali's camp. The Commander of the Faithful tried to solve the problem through negotiations. Refraining from armed conflict so long as possible. But Mu'awiyah considered his possession of the river bank as a major military gain, and taking advantage of his position he refused to negotiate. 'Ali's companions had a hard time due to the lack of drinking water. Thereat 'Ali addressed his soldiers as follows:

They are hungry of battle and are asking for it. Now you have no more than two alternatives before you: either to submit to disgrace and indignity, or to drench your swords in blood and obtain water. To live in subjugation is death. Real life is to die while overpowering the enemy and without yielding to indignity. Mu'awiyah leads a party of deceived persons whom he has kept them in the dark about the truth, to the point that they have made their arrows a target of your throats.(٢)

This fiery speech created a wonderful change in the morale of 'Ali's soldiers and filled them with the spirit of courage. With a lightning attack they threw back Mu'awiyah's forces from the river bank and took control of it. But, then,

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١- Nahj al Balagha, Khutab ٣٨

٢- Ibid, Khutab ۵١

.with a manly spirit they allowed the enemies to have access to water for their needs

Courage in its Wider Sense

Courage is not confined to the battlefield. Rather, it extends to all areas of life and is .needed in all situations

Dr. Marden discusses as follows the value of this outstanding moral virtue in various :circumstances

It requires courage to wear coarse cotton clothing when one's fellows put on garments made of broadcloth. Courage is needed to live a life of rectitude in the midst of poverty while others gather wealth through fraud and inequity. It requires courage to say 'No,' when everyone around you says 'Yes'. It requires courage to carry out one's duty in silence and anonymity when others hoard riches and acquire fame lay abandoning their sacred commitments. It requires courage to appear what you are .and to disclose your shortcomings for critical eyes

Ultimately, it requires courage to bear defeat and ridicule and not to be understood by the people. The young man who begins by being afraid to express what he thinks will .end up being afraid of even thinking about what he cherishes in his heart

How afraid are we of acting according to our wishes. We want to live like others. Our clothes, lifestyle, means of transport everything, must conform to the day's fashion, or we would be social outcasts! It requires courage for a man of social standing not to bow to common prejudices and to refrain from complying with social customs (injurious to morality and health.(۱

One of the salient qualities

Marden, Orison Swett, Asrar e Kamiyabi, p. ۱۴ -۱

of those who had received an Islamic upbringing was their disregard for tyrannical rulers, despotic caliphs who had usurped power, so much so that they preserved their .spiritual poise and intellectual strength under the most difficult of conditions

Once Hisham ibn 'Abd al-Malik went to Makkah during the days of his rule to perform the pilgrimage of the House of God and the rites of hajj. He ordered that any person who had seen the Prophet of God, may Peace and God's benedictions be upon him and his Household, be brought into his presence so that he may discuss certain matters with him. He was told that no one from the Prophet's companions was alive. Hisham asked them to bring someone from among the Tabi'un (the people of the next .generation after the Companions) so that he may benefit from his discourse

Tawus al-Yamani was invited to see the caliph. When Tawus came into Hisham's presence, he took off his shoes before the caliph and saluted him simply and unceremoniously: "Salamun 'alaykum." He did not salute the caliph with the usual title 'Amir al-Mu'minin' (commander of all the faithful) by which he was addressed by all classes of people. Then, without waiting for the caliph's leave, he sat down on the "?ground facing him. Then turning to Hisham he said: " O Hisham! How do you do

This informal conduct and speech of Tawus angered Hisham. Turning to Tawus he ,said: "What is this behaviour of yours in my presence?" Tawus asked him

What did I do?" The caliph said, "Why did you take off your shoes in front of me?" Why didn't you address me with my appellation Amir al-Mu'minin? Why did you sit down in my court without my permission? Why did you inquire about my welfare in an "?irreverent manner

Tawus replied: 'As to my taking off my shoes in your presence, I do it five times daily in the presence of God, and I am not considered worthy of divine wrath on that account. The reason that I did not salute you with the appellation 'Amir al-Mu'minin' is that you are not the commander of all the faithful, many of whom are unhappy with your caliphate and rule. As to my calling you by your name (and not by kuniyah), God, in the Noble Qur'an, has called His apostles with their names, addressing them with such words as "O David," "O Jesus," "O John," and nobody considers that disparaging in respect of the sublime station of the prophets. On the contrary, the Qur'an mentions Abu Lahab with his kuniyah. The reason as to why I sat down without waiting for your permission in your presence is that I have heard 'Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, say: 'If you wish to see the inmates of hell, then look at him who sits while those "'.around him are standing

When Tawus had made these remarks, Hisham said to him, "O Tawus, exhort me! Tawus said, "I have heard 'Ali, the Commander of

the Faithful, say, 'In hell are creatures with venomous stings which have been assigned to sting rulers who treat the people unjustly in the world.' " Having said this, he rose from the caliph's assembly and left.(١)

Hypocrisy, an Expression of Fear

Hypocrisy and ostentation reflect an inner fear. Courage rescues man from the clutches of hypocrisy and instils sincerity and authenticity into his soul. Ralph Waldo Emerson says:

If we cannot at once rise to the sanctities of obedience and faith, let us at least resist our temptations: let us enter into the state of war and wake Thor and Woden, courage and constancy, in our Saxon breasts. This is to be done in our smooth times by speaking the truth. Check this lying hospitality and lying affection. Live no longer to the expectation of these deceived and deceiving people with whom we converse. Say to them, "O father, O mother, O wife, O brother, O friend, I have lived with you after appearances hitherto. Henceforward I am the truth's. Be it known unto you that henceforward I obey no law less than the eternal law. I will have no covenants but proximities. I shall endeavour to nourish my parents, to support my family, to be the chaste husband of one wife-but these relations I must fill after a new and unprecedented way. I appeal from your customs. I must be myself. I cannot break myself any longer for you, or you. If you can love me for what I am, we shall be happier. If

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١- Safinat al Bihar, vol. ٢ p. ٩۵

you cannot, I will still seek to deserve that you should. I will not hide my tastes or aversions. I will so trust that what is deep is holy, that I will do strongly before the sun and moon whatever innerly rejoices me and the heart appoints. If you are noble, I will love you; if you are not, I will not hurt you and myself by hypocritical attentions. If you are true, but not in the same truth with me, cleave to your companions; I will seek my own. I do this not selfishly but humbly and truly. It is alike your interest, and mine, and all men's, however long we have dwelt in lies, to live in the truth. Does this sound harsh to-day? You will soon love what is dictated by your nature as well as mine, and if we follow the truth it will bring us our safe at last." But so may you give these friends pain. Yes, but I cannot sell my liberty and my power, to save their sensibility. Besides, all persons have their moments of reason, when they took out into the region of absolute truth; then will they justify me and do the same thing.(۱)

The relation of courage to personal capacity is like the relation of will power to ability. Until one does not utilise one's will power one will not succeed in accomplishing one's tasks regardless of the extent of one's ability to perform them. Similarly, as long as the

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۱- Emerson, Ralph Waldo, "Self Reliance" in Man and Man: The Social Philosophers, p. ۴۰۷

talents and capacities of an intelligent and perspicacious person are not accompanied by courage and action he will not attain any noble and distinguished goal. A courageous person does not complain of being worn out in confronting difficulties and .bears the unavoidable tragedies of life with a manly spirit

It is an unfortunate man whose expectations are great but the amount of whose courage is paltry. Thoughtful people know well that one must go beyond one's expectations and wishes and resort to action; otherwise weakness and lethargy will make even feasible tasks appear impossible. It should however be opted that in the same way as at times in life one has to get ready and fight, so also at times it is wiser to withdraw. Those who never flag in asserting themselves and do not surrender in .face of dangers may achieve their goal, but that may be at the cost of their own lives

The most outstanding achievement of heroic persons is to conquer fear and remain steadfast with all their strength and power in the face of fear and without .compromising the value of their own lives

Of course, it is possible that one may achieve some success by appearing to be undaunted in one's efforts, but in these conditions it is possible that one may set out to do something which is impossible. When the goal is not achieved he may end up losing self-confidence and faith in his own capacities. Moreover, a great amount of his energy and

.power, which might have been employed fruitfully, will be wasted

:The Eleventh Imam-may Peace be upon him-said

There is a limit to prudence, beyond which it becomes cowardice. There is a limit to courage, beyond which it becomes rashness.(۱)

On the whole there is a basic difference between fear and foresight. 'Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, may Peace be upon him, points this out in his sayings

When fate is inevitable, caution and wariness are pointless.(۲)

When someone's resoluteness is accompanied with foresight, that would lead him to consummate felicity.(۳)

:Bertrand Russell writes

Life is full of perils, but the wise man ignores those that are inevitable, and acts prudently but without emotions as regards those that can be avoided. You cannot avoid dying, but you can avoid dying intestate; therefore make your will, and forget that you are mortal. Rational provision against misfortune is a totally different thing from fear; it is a part of wisdom, whereas all fear is slavish. If you cannot avoid feeling fears, try to prevent your child from suspecting them. Above all, give him that wide outlook and that multiplicity of vivid interests that will prevent him, in later life, from brooding about possibilities of personal misfortune. Only you can make him a free citizen of the universe. Fear, as an emotion, is disastrous in all cases where the right course can only be discovered by thinking; we want, therefore, to be able to foresee possibilities of evil without feeling fear, and to use our intelligence for the purpose of

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۱- Bihar al anwar, vol. ۱۷ p . ۲۱۸

۲- al Amidi, Ghurar al Hikam, p. ۳۱۵

۳- Ibid

avoiding what is inevitable. Evils which are really inevitable have to be treated with (sheer courage ...(۱

That which is certain is that one cannot succeed in overcoming life's hardships through fear and anxiety. A cool head and a strong and self-reliant spirit are needed to resolve knotty problems. One whose thoughts are constantly assailed by fear and .panic will find the world grim and horrifying

Those Who lack courage do not find refuge from the awesome tempests of life. The danger exists that they may resort to suicide in order to escape the torment of fear .and anxiety

:Ali, may Peace be upon him, said

(Worthy men are reserved for times of adversity.(۲

p: ۴۲۶

Russell, Bertrand, On Education, pp. ۶۶-۷, ۱۵۴ -۱

al Amidi, Ghurar al hikam, p. ۵۸۱ -۲

About center

In the name of Allah

هَلْيَسْتَوِيالَّذِينَيَعْلَمُونَوَالَّذِينَلَايَعْلَمُونَ

?Are those who know equal to those who do not know

al-Zumar: ٩

:Introduction

Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan, from ٢٠٠٧, under the authority of Ayatollah Haj SayyedHasanFaqihImami (God blesses his soul), by sincere and daily efforts of university and seminary elites and sophisticated groups began its activities .in religious, cultural and scientific fields

:Manifesto

Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan in order to facilitate and accelerate the accessibility of researchers to the books and tools of research, in the field of Islamic science, and regarding the multiplicity and dispersion of active centers in this field

and numerous and inaccessible sources by a mere scientific intention and far from any kind of social, political, tribal and personal prejudices and currents, based on performing a project in the shape of (management of produced and published works from all Shia centers) tries to provide a rich and free collection of books and research papers for the experts, and helpful contents and discussions for the educated generation and all classes of people interested in reading, with various formats in the .cyberspace

:Our Goals are

(propagating the culture and teachings of Thaqalayn (Quran and Ahlulbayt p.b.u.t-

encouraging the populace particularly the youth in investigating the religious issues-

replacing useful contents with useless ones in the cellphones, tablets and computers-

providing services for seminary and university researchers-

spreading culture study in the publich-

paving the way for the publications and authors to digitize their works-

:Policies

acting according to the legal licenses-

relationship with similar centers-

avoiding parallel working-

merely presenting scientific contents-

mentioning the sources-

.It's obvious that all the responsibilities are due to the author

:Other activities of the institute

Publication of books, booklets and other editions-

Holding book reading competitions-

Producing virtual, three dimensional exhibitions, panoramas of religious and tourism-places

.Producing animations, computer games and etc-

Launching the website with this address: www.ghaemiyeh.com-

Fabricatingdramatic and speech works-

Launching the system of answering religious, ethical and doctrinal questions-

Designing systems of accounting, media and mobile, automatic and handy systems,-web kiosks

Holding virtual educational courses for the public-

Holding virtual teacher-training courses-

Producing thousands of research software in three languages (Persian, Arabic and-English) which can be performed in computers, tablets and cellphones and available and downloadable with eight international formats: JAVA, ANDROID, EPUB, CHM, PDF, HTML, CHM, GHB on the website

Also producing four markets named "Ghaemiyeh Book Market" with Android, IOS,-WINDOWS PHONE and WINDOWS editions

:Appreciation

We would appreciate the centers, institutes, publications, authors and all honorable .friends who contributed their help and data to us to reach the holy goal we follow

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